



*Enlightenment
in The Moment*

GEDE PRAMA

Enlightenment in The Moment

Watering the seeds of
Enlightenment

GEDE PRAMA

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*To all Masters preserving the
eternity of the life-enlightening
sacred doctrines*

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Bali Island (especially Tajun village in its northern region) has provided a place for my birth, as well as bestowed me with blessings of development materials and "signs" of my destination since my early childhood.

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To all mentioned above, there is no other word than thanks! May this book be helpful and meaningful for the happiness of all beings.

Padangasah, Tajun Village, North Bali 2010

**deep bow,
gede prama**

Front Gate

Enlightenment in the Moment

With the advent of the enlightenment ray all origins of suffering (fear, doubt, worry, etc.) will disappear, just like how a person's fear in the darkness will recede as he turns on the light and realizes that what he once thought as a snake is merely a rope.

Enlightenment in the Moment¹

Welcome to a place enlightenment calls home; a sanctum that hopefully may emanate the brilliant light of revival, peacefulness, benevolence, and tranquility to all directions. While our mortal eyes behold that the sun is the primary source of light, we also see that not all beings accede exposing themselves to its ray. In the similar manner, spiritual masters and teachings are only capable to enlighten those who open up their heart thus the disciples of divinity are strongly suggested to respect, prostrate, and be devoted to their master. Devotion is the key to unlock the window of the students' heart so the master's teaching may shine upon their inner self.

Counselors of Light

There are times when fellow seekers come before their Guru with doubt in mind and ask: "Have you attained enlightenment

¹ *Either caused by my precious life experience or by the spiritual ambience of Bali where I was born and grew up, I have been greatly influenced by Tantric teachings since the initial steps of my spiritual journey. Therefore, I hereby wish the readers' understanding for the intense Tantric nature in the discussion of enlightenment contained in this book.*

Might be seen as the most generous kind among the counselors of light, the shepherd-like masters prefer to dedicate all of their efforts in providing guidance rather than minding their own enlightenment. It is only when their tasks have been accomplished that these masters begin spreading their wings to ascend into the realm of the limitless light

yourself that you dare to lecture about it?" According to Tantric elders, there are three kinds of master. The first is the one resembles a king, the second a captain, and the third a shepherd.

It is true that for the king-type teachers enlightenment is to be discoursed only after they have attained it themselves. The captain-like ones favor to embark the ship and carry out the quest together with their students thus all of them might reach the shore of enlightenment at the same time. The shepherds, however, feed their stocks before they take their own meal, which means that disciples studying under the shepherd-like masters shall realize enlightenment even before their mentors.

In other words, being enlightened is not obligatory for a shepherd-like master to deliver his or her knowledge. Might be seen as the most generous kind among the counselors of light, the shepherd-like masters prefer to dedicate all of their efforts in providing guidance rather than minding their own enlightenment. It is only when their tasks have been accomplished that these masters begin spreading their wings to ascend into the realm of the limitless light.

Enlightenment: Destination versus Journey

For some people enlightenment is the destination; the promised land awaits in the end of a long and distant journey walking on thorny path.

*Not loving to be acknowledged as
a "good Samaritan" but because
compassion is among the natural
features of an enlightened being*

In this perception, which indeed deserves to be appreciated as well, there are marks and indicators of one's meditation progress serving as road signs to the travelers. Be cautious that these signs might also lead to disorientation, particularly because at a certain stage enlightenment and liberation are free from structure, criteria, moreover concept.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the disciples who need this sort of signs (to find enlightenment defined as the destination), some Tantric masters like Tulku Urygen Rinpoche frequently mention three kinds of enlightenment that a devotee might perceive as his or her objectives. The first one is the enlightenment in this mortal life, characterized by the practitioner's encounter with three kinds of *samadhi* (concentration) namely *samadhi* of suchness in which he or she sees that all things are already perfect as they are, *samadhi of illumination* where the practitioner banishes the darkness of confusion thus obtains crystal-clear perception toward life, and *samadhi of seed syllable* in which the practitioner hears, sees, and places the sacred syllable within his or her heart.

The second is the enlightenment at the moment of death. After many years of practicing awareness, death to the determined disciples is an egg-breaking process to *garuda's* offspring in which they instantly soar into the realm of liberation.

If enlightenment is unattainable at the two times mentioned above, the third opportunity so therefore is that it is experienced during the period in *bardo* realm; a stage between death and

*Enlightened beings love not
because the fear of hell and the desire
of heaven. Similar to how a goat
naturally eats grass whereas a wolf
consumes meat, compassion is simply
a part of what the enlightened beings are*

rebirth of a soul. All happenings in this realm are actually sequences of rising and falling phenomena. They are nothing but mere reflections of the disciple's own mind, hence there is no need for over anxiety and over enjoyment. For those frequently obtain peacefulness, steadiness, and unobstructed sight in their meditation, the period in *bardo* realm serves as a "final battle" for enlightenment.

It is important to notice that attaining enlightenment at the moment of death and in *bardo* realm is harder than during the sleeping state and far more difficult than in the waking hours, mainly because temptations in such state and realm are much more excessive. In this respect, the only resolution then is to start the practice of mindfulness from now. A determined exercise of mindfulness in waking hours is the asset to perform the same practice during sleep and, consecutively, the balanced awareness resulted in dreams is the prime material in developing mindfulness at the moment death and in *bardo* realm. This is the hidden sense behind some masters' saying that "dream is the counterpart of death".

As have been mentioned earlier, it is also possible to see glimpses on enlightenment along the way. Some refer to this as bits of realization, and the collection of these pieces might later help in attaining the total liberation discussed in the standpoint that views enlightenment as the destination.

In order to recognize enlightenment along the journey, a traveler needs to live out three practices. The first is to

*Upon the dawn of enlightenment it will
become clear that all things formerly
desired and despised are nothing but
dreams; a realization that will initiate
a smile on the lips of the seer*

profoundly see that all beings desire happiness and despise sadness (thus it is suggested to love other beings or at least to avoid causing harm). The second is to maintain awareness during every moment of daily life (see “Enlightenment in Every Step” in the Rear Gate section) while the third is to realize that, actually, all things happen are merely raising and falling waves in the ocean of life. Like in the literal ocean, some of the waves are huge while some others are small, and, despite of how huge or small they are, all of them will in time bow deeply to tenderly kiss the shoreline (death). The coast (death) itself is in truth not a separation but a backflow to re-embrace the ocean of enlightenment.

Anyone who has successfully mingled his or her life with meditation will understand a master’s message that “Enlightenment is so close, that’s why people don’t see it. Enlightenment is so simple that’s why people don’t believe it”. Enlightenment is like an open book so close to our eyes that we can not read the letters, and it is so simple hence unbelievable to human’s mind with its fondness of complexity.

Eventually, upon the dawn of the enlightenment it will become clear that all things formerly desired and detested are nothing but dreams. Realizing this truth and being liberated from the grip of illusions, the seer may now rest peacefully with smile on his or her lips.

Weaving the Destination and the Journey

Although the perspective seeing enlightenment as a destination seems different to the one perceiving enlightenment as a journey, there is a silver lining that connects the two in which both underline the significance of awakening the mind from the dreaming state that wrongly views the ups and downs of the mind as life itself. Once accomplished, this awakening will immediately generate the infinite compassion to all beings.

In simpler words, the serenity (the awakened mind) taught as a path of enlightenment is always embraced by compassion. It is perfect only when filled with compassion as well as compassion resolution is also perfect only when practiced in serenity (non-selfness)².

Consequently, all experiences in daily life (bathing, eating, working, praying, even being offended) those are illuminated by mindfulness and compassion become steps toward enlightenment.

² *Fellow seekers who find comfort in the way of compassion (gentle, caring, easily moved by other beings' sorrow) shall read A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night by H.H. Dalai Lama (Shambala Dragon Edition 1994), while those who gain resolution in the path of tranquility (calm, secure, balanced) are recommended to Essence of the Heart Sutra (also written by H.H. Dalai Lama, Wisdom Publications 2005) or The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion by Thich Nhat Hanh (Parallax Press 1992). It is important to be aware that in the end these two paths will meet at the same summit, which is enlightenment.*

Firstly, in profound awareness it will be realized that the ups and downs of life (success – failure, health – sickness) are merely parts of natural cycle, simply like the turning of night into day. Resisting the circle of life is suffering whereas flowing perfectly with it is enlightenment.

It is similar to how a person’s fear upon confronting a long and thin object in the darkness recedes as he turns on the light and realizes the thing as a rope instead of a snake. Once the ray of enlightenment emerges, all origins of sorrow (fear, doubt, worry) will disappear. This explains why lion is among the symbols of enlightenment; it is fearless, even against death.

It is unique that, within the brilliant light of enlightenment (where it is obvious that all are merely sequences in a series of interconnectedness often referred to as the void), the self (ego) as the source of suffering is vanished and substituted by a desire to continuously share one’s love to all beings. Not with the intention to be acknowledged as a “good Samaritan” but because loving kindness is among the natural features of an enlightened being.

Similar to how a goat rejects consuming meat without lecturing the benefit of vegetarianism and the sin of butchery whereas a wolf refuses eating grass without arguing that vegetarianism is foolish and how delicious meat is, enlightened beings love not because the fear of hell and the desire of heaven but simply because it is a part of what they are.

Diversity of the Path

Just like a mountain has more than one way by which its summit might be reached, this book provides two alternatives. The first is mingling life with meditation as exemplified in the first chapter of the Rear Gate section entitled “Enlightened in Every Step” while the second is through the practice of *Guru yoga* and *Guru puja* discussed in the second chapter of the particular section. Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh (in *Present Moment Wonderful Moment*) walks the first path while Tantric masters like His Holiness Dalai Lama travel the second. The readers are free to choose, whether from the two alternatives presented in this book or from other ways not mentioned here.

Whichever road taken, it is hard to imagine – if it is even possible at all – that there is a path leading to enlightenment without meditation. Therefore, this book is concluded with a short writing entitled “Meditation: Revival, Serenity, and Peacefulness”.

As a guidance in search for meditation instructor and a means to recognize the ascended masters, the ancient tradition of Tantra states that enlightened beings possess the following natures: pacifying (their teaching and daily life lead to calmness, serenity, and peacefulness), enriching (broadens one’s perspective and understanding), magnetizing (attracting a lot of people to do benevolent acts, share compassion, and meditate), and

subjugating (in case when it is required, they will subdue other beings with their compassion)³.

³ *For the beginners, it is best to use the short writings compiled in the middle part of this book as contemplation materials to enrich their journey. For the intermediate practitioners, it is also recommended to read this book thoroughly, study the references, and, the most important of all, to put the knowledge they receive into practice in their daily life.*

First Anthology

Bits and Pieces of Enlightenment

Disaster is not only the upstream of tears. It is a chime of mindfulness calling humanity to come home.

Promenading Home

When disaster stroke Indonesia claiming thousands of life, someone wrote: "Indonesia, Natural disaster or mass murder". In this point of view, the expression of disaster is all dreadful.

However, those who contemplate the long course of history and converse with nature shall see that there is not a single moment in time where life is totally free from grieve. United States, for example, experienced bloody periods before being the world's economic leader. Japan gains its revival after the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki while China, the present world's third strongest economy force, experienced several decades when rice was a luxurious commodity.

Pondering this point, sorrow certainly evokes empathy, prayer for the happiness of all, and even better concrete actions to alleviate other beings' misery. Meanwhile, understanding the nature's capacity as educator, it is worthwhile to contemplate the message concealed behind all of the tragedies.

Eastern wisdom recognizes four kinds of guru those are the living master, the sacred writing, the symbolic guidance, and the secret teacher hidden within the self. The first and the second

*A master once said that when people give
help they do not only alleviate
others' burden but as well increase
the energy of loving kindness
within their selves*

are relatively easy to identify, but only those with a certain degree of sensitivity are able to distinguish the latter two.

Growing in the Mud

Given a chance, anyone will stay away from disaster. And when such evasion is impossible, the sages perform deep contemplation thus they may behold the light behind the tragedy. Jesus shines for thousands of years because of the crucifixion, Mahatma Gandhi enlightens numerous souls by being shot to death, and Rumi's sorrow of losing his master makes his words touching.

From such facts we can learn that disaster is not only the upstream of tears but might also become the beginning of a luminous life. While being separated from the loved ones and handicapped by an accident are indeed painful, one still has to realize that life is abundance of symbolic teachings.

Among the symbolic teachers, death is the grandest one. Only a few souls mind to do contemplation in the midst of happiness but before death one does not have other choice.

Furthermore, whoever "communicates" with death will unveil the two faces of sorrow. The first enables him or her to be more connected both vertically and horizontally by the understanding of human powerlessness, in which caring each other is the only source of revival. The second is that sorrow functions as a turbo machine driving souls away from this realm of suffering because

*The divine energy from above is
triggering human with compassion and
whoever lives his or her life with love
and devotion is attempting to take the chance*

if life is only filled with happiness then humanity will be ensnared in the circle of life, suffering, and death, for all eternity.

With this point of view, Indonesia is no longer a purgatory of mistakes and punishments but a fertile land for cultivation. Notice that when Aceh was ravaged by tsunami the followers of Islam, Catholic, Christianity, Hindu, Buddhism, and Confucianism joined hands to pray and relieve. A master once said that when people give help they do not only alleviate others' burden but as well increase the energy of loving kindness within their selves.

Thousands of years ago, elders in Peru wrote that all happenings are a series of messages thus there is no such thing as coincidence. In a place often tempted by suffering, how many souls have found light behind sorrow and then submitted to its guidance?

Life is similar to a house. It attracts flies and mosquitoes if dirty with trashes but invites colorful butterflies when filled with flowers. Before the angry nature, condemnation will only add the pile of trash in our dwelling whereas finding a way to grow in the mud is a more possible solution to turn Indonesia into an enchanting garden. In this perspective, we can understand why Ezra Bayda entitled his work *At Home in the Muddy Water*. In the East, the summit of the inward journey is often symbolized as a lotus growing and blooming in the mud while maintaining its purity.

Disaster is similar to mud and only those who are full of love and gratitude may blossom like a lotus. In the muddy water, the holy energy from above is triggering human with compassion and whoever lives his or her life with love and devotion is attempting to take the chance.

In this instance, disaster is not a punishment but a call to home, similar to the children song quoted in the beginning of this chapter. Hereby it is also recommended to contemplate the following words of a master: “*Go beyond positive and negative, by opening ourselves to our feelings and experiencing our mind just as it is*”. Happiness – sadness and other dualities exist only in the mind. Exceeding them by embracing all as they are; that is the path taken by the enlightened masters from the East.

If you cannot love those who treat you badly, your mind has not been fully transformed.

Love Banquet for the Terrorists

Most people share a likeness in daily life; casting away the unpleasant things and scrambling the pleasant ones. Not only in war and separation, but these things happen in spirituality as well. God and saints are worshipped while Satan and sinners are condemned. And, as has been neatly chronicled by history, this way do not put us away from conflicts and sorrow but instead draw us closer to them with tremendous escalating degree. Terrorists' bombs and North Korean's nuclear weaponry are only some to be mentioned among many other evidences.

Issue on the Development Materials

United States during George Walker Bush presidency was an example. With its formidability, America desired to bring an end to terrorism by the means of violence and one point in this effort was even by terming several countries as "axis of evil". Some years later, the terrorists become more threatening, Afghanistan and Iraq are wretched, and even the United States itself experiences alarming setback. This portrays valuable lesson that fighting violence with violence, evil with evil, are similar to pouring gasoline to a blazing fire.

*Bring people home. Hatred, anger, and
violence are not the real destinations.
There are no true dwellings but
love and sincerity*

In fact, there are always tempters in every period of time. In the Prophet Muhammad's era it was the Quraish, in Jesus' it was Judas. Rama's wife was abducted by Rahwana, Shri Krishna was forced to engage in battle by Duryodana's greed, and Buddha experienced murderous attempts by Devadatta. This long series of history tells that trying to eliminate temptation is both useless and against the law of nature. Moreover, there is never a growth without temptation.

A father once said to his kid: "Son, as you are getting older there will be more troubles ahead. But please remember that they do not come in your way to be terminated, for their purpose is to turn you into man". The universe is getting older indeed thus there are more and more problems and only the hands of the wise are able to transform difficulties into blessings of development. Masters taking this path believe that "*When sorrow invades the mind, compassion arises*", and for them the darkness of suffering does not invite the obscurity of anger but initiates the light of compassion.

The Clouds of Misunderstanding

During a majlis ta'lim in Jakarta a beautiful message was spoken: "Do not stay away from those harsh and vicious fellows. Someone must approach, care, and love them, especially so they might leave the dark circle of violence". What a rejuvenating invitation of wisdom that unveils the calm and sheltering expressions of Islam.

*Those who teach religion should
introduce their pupils to the lovely
expression of spirituality that is beautiful
in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end*

A grandfather once said as he tenderly stroked the hair of his angry grandson: “However hurt your body is, no matter burdened your soul is, remember never to make a being a foe because the true enemy is misunderstanding”.

Take a time to look closer at the terrorists. They were also created by couples embracing each other intimately, wished by their parents to become useful persons, educated about generosity at school. They also make their worship in religious places for salvation. However, because of their incomprehension on one or two matters, they are covered by clouds of misunderstandings. Moreover, they are not the only party responsible for these clouds. The unfairness of the world, violent news, disorganized government, intimidating schools, broken families, poor role models, and tempting advertisements are merely some elements of the net leading them into the dark tunnel of misapprehension. Criminating them will only thicken the clouds, and condemning a late person is never taught in any religion.

In this point of view, it can be realized that it is unreasonable to put all the blame to the terrorists. Understanding how limited their education, social scope, and religious knowledge are, it is more proper to see them as the victims rather than the generators of misinterpretation. It is similar to a person getting furious toward the flies while his house is full of disgusting trashes. Actually, it is the violence and bedlam of humanity that invite the terrorists’ violence. If the house is clean and fragrant, the flies will go naturally.

Therefore, understanding that violence cannot be expelled by condemning the terrorists, now is the time to clean the house of daily living. Referring to an elder's saying, all people are good for a kind person. Heed the message of a counselor in the path of kindness: "If you cannot love those who treat you badly, it's a sign that your mind has not been fully transformed".

A modest hermit whose heart was made tremble and weep by the explosion of the terrorists' bombs heard the voice of his inner guru: "Bring people home. Hatred, anger, and violence are not the real destinations. There are no true dwellings but love and sincerity". This reminds us to how Noah obeyed the inward voice to build the giant ship despite the fact that he was living in a desert, and how Abraham wholeheartedly carried out the inner command to sacrifice his son.

Enlightened by this spiritual insight, perhaps it is worth to consider sending a banquet of love to the terrorists. Leaders and public figures should be cautious because they are role models. Religion teachers should introduce their pupils to the lovely expression of spirituality that is beautiful in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. Parents should love their children. Reporters should report gentleness. Television should broadcast programs that arouse compassionate energy. Those are some examples on how we can present love banquet to anyone potential to become a terrorist in the future.

In addition, this act is also a proof that our inner home has already clean and clear; a mind by which we may welcome a more promising future. Sufi mystic Jalaludin Rumi once wrote that life is like managing a guest house; the visitors come and go, but whoever the one in right now (happiness – sadness) never forget to put a smile on your lips.

From time to time, dignified leaders across the lands share one resemblance. They have the mind of Brahmana enriched by nobility and the body of Khsatria strengthened by bravery.

Authority, Uncertainty, Clarity

Perhaps it is quite reasonable to call 2009 a year of turmoil. Indonesia was confused by the cases of KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) versus Polri (Indonesian Police) and the Century Bank. United Nations' General Assembly was disgraced by the tearing of UN's charter by Libyan's president Moammar Khadafi, followed by the loud standing protest of the Great Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown. A reporter threw his shoes to Bush while Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi struck in the face by a protester during a rally. Contemplating these records of history, it seems like authority always give raise to turmoil.

According to the almanacs of certain ancient traditions, we are currently in a dark age thus cosmic chaos is taking place everywhere. Lands once blessed by witnessing the birth of revelations and prophets (India, Pakistan, Middle East) are now blazing with war. Swat Valley of Pakistan, where in the past around a hundred thousand people extraordinarily attained enlightenment at the same time, is now bleeding by gun shots.

When even such holy places are now turned horrible, it is hard to imagine the present nature of authority; one matter that has

*The elders crystallized the core of
leadership in one simple phrase:
"abiding mind, serving body"*

been dirty, bloody, and fearsome since the ancient days. While it is true indeed that between times the world celebrates the birth of some gentle expressions of authority like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Hatta, and HH Dalai Lama, yet some others slipped into madness like Ferdinand Marcos and Hitler. This is portraying options faced by every leader in charge; to be made noble or insane by authority.

The Silence that Serves

From time to time, dignified leaders across the lands share one resemblance that they have the mind of *Brahmana* enriched by nobility and the body of *Khsatria* strengthened by bravery.

Accomplishing hard ascetic practices (fasting, abiding, meditating, etc.), the summit of a *Brahmana's* journey is attained when his or her mind has reached a stage mentioned by Javanese elders as *Suwung*. There is no ego, fear, desire, moreover greed left. All are vanish consumed by *Suwung*, like the space which is unseen yet bestows unlimited compassion by providing room to grow for everything and everyone. Without the space sunlight cannot perform its task thus the growth of many creations will not be possible, and that is how a *Suwung* mind is. It is often referred to as knowing one thing then liberating all. The infinitude of their compassion makes *Brahmanas* live longer in the people's mind than in their own physical bodies.

*Sadness and sufferings are not reasons
to inflame rage but means to purify the heart*

Strict military discipline endured by *Khsatrias* makes their feet always walk firmly and fearlessly while their hands are constantly prepared to wield their weapon without hesitation. There is no place for uncertainty; it is merely a sign that the mind has not attained the stage of *Suwung* yet. Enlightened by a *Suwung* mind, a leader is able to make any necessary decision without any cross to bear.

An agile *Khsatria* without *Suwung* mind is like a soldier shooting frantically to all directions. On the other hand, a *Brahmana* without dexterity will just end up as an intercessor at a wrong place, because he or she is not born to pray but to act relieving people from poverty, ignorance, injustice and backwardness.

The Core of Leadership

Thus, a father once said to his son: “See like the sky and act like the earth”. In seeing like the sky (*Suwung*), all are sheltered and protected without discrimination. But in doing action, strictly obey the law of the earth by which farmers harvest exactly what they sow, thus punishment to the corrupted and honor to the devoted. That’s why the elders crystallize the core of leadership in one simple phrase: “abiding mind, serving body”.

This knowledge is embodied by leaders like Mohammad Hatta, Nelson Mandela and HH Dalai Lama. Upon a disagreement, without any burden Mr. Hatta returned to his profession as a lecturer at Universitas Gadjah Mada (a university in Yogyakarta, Central Java, Indonesia). The moral is very clear: the ego of a

leader must submit to the orderliness and well being of the people.

When the apartheid regime collapsed, Nelson Mandela, who was jailed for more than twenty five years and almost die several times, preferred to forgive rather than to take revenge, obviously exemplifies that authority is not an instrument of vengeance and greed but a vehicle to leave the island of backwardness.

His Holiness Dalai Lama was born and grew up in a land abounded with sadness and suffering. His country was occupied during His teen and He took refuge living in a very simple place in North India for more than twenty five years while His people become minorities in their own land. People frequently notice tears in His eyes when He enunciates the following prayer: "As long as there are spaces and beings, may I be reborn to this land thus I may liberate souls from the darkness of anger, greed, and confusion". The message is wonderfully illuminating, explaining that sadness and sorrow are not reasons to inflame rage but means to purify the heart.

If one day civilization gives birth to a leader with abiding mind and serving body then perhaps authority may walk hand in hand with clarity.

The wonder of loving-kindness is that the doers may be rejuvenated not only when they arrive at the destination but during the journey as well.

The Shield of Kindness

“Strayed” seems to be a word suitable to be associated to the Indonesian justice seekers, whose stories are dominated with sadness and misery similar to abandoned chickens under heavy rains.

Case of court-mafia bluntly portrays that police and judiciary departments are not competent shelters. The findings of “Tim Delapan” foreshadow that public’s temporary resting places are going to be crushed by the authority just like the illegal huts under the bridge.

The world is in a shortage of sheltering leaders. Europe used to be a role model, yet an ex prime minister who used to be internationally admired and honored was recently entwined in a corruption case. Indonesian leaders prefer obscuring the circumstance with their intricate political maneuvers (by spreading deceitful rumor, attacking people, even manipulating reports) than providing certainty and exemplification of law enforcement to the agitated public.

In the past, religious institution was among the calming sanctuaries where people used to gather for generous intentions

*Enlightening the self with the Knowledge
that all beings desire happiness
and despise sadness is the practice
of the sages as well as the refuge of the wise*

of praying, serving and restoring each other. When public needs shelter, a spiritual personae should approach the leaders and sprinkle the holy water of serenity.

Family was formerly a soothing refuge, especially because under its shelter life is calm and gentle. Now divorce rate is rocketing sky-high everywhere. Working place used to be more than a site to make a living but also to share. Nowadays rivalry turns violent, and by the idea of “achieving society” the seekers of serenity are considered as lazy and futureless people.

All of these trigger upsetting curiosity on where humanity is going to take refuge and find calmness, serenity, and justice?

A sociologist mentions that trust is an attaching element in society without which any social unit will perish, and through the transparent story of the court mafia we are witnessing the melting of the particular component.

Perhaps a friend’s thought about the cosmic chaos is true. It is signified by the disturbing reversions where the hat (kindness) is being stepped by the feet while the shoe (anger) is covering the head. Leaders, who in the past were the sources of counsel, now are degraded into actors of pathetic drama.

The Enchanting Lake of Kindness

Possibly caused by this rareness of sanctuary, in meditation the practitioners are guided to take refuge in three protectors. The

*In the midst of sadness, confusion, turmoil,
vand agitation, people seek
refuge in the sense of justice which might lead
to enflame the ember of our national
security. In this case perhaps it is
necessary to consider returning to
the fundamental nature of human being:
basic goodness*

first is the benevolence within his or her self. The second is teachings that generate kindness, whereas the third is people who practice compassion in their daily life.

Anyone given a chance to visit a penitentiary knows that most of the convicts are generous human beings whose involvement in crime is merely an unintentional lapse, sometimes caused by the unavailability of other option. Furthermore, when the so called villains might still show kindness in the gleam of their eyes, can't we do better?

This fact inspires that immersing one's self into the lake of kindness is not a daily practice exclusively belong to the saints and that it is not something too hard to be conducted by common people. It can be practiced by anyone in any place. The diamond-like benevolence has been resided within the heart of humanity since the beginning; it is only temporarily covered by the mud of confusion, hatred and anger.

Therefore, in meditation the sludge is being scraped by consciously realizing that all creations desire happiness and despise sadness. Later on, anything performed with awareness is meditation, especially when enriched by teachings on loving-kindness. The wonder of loving-kindness is that the doers may be rejuvenated not only when they arrive at the destination but during the journey as well. Those who comprehend this point shall agree that people with a certain level of kindness will always see nothing but virtue in every person they meet.

Life is easily heated up because the thick dirt of confusion, hatred, and anger prevents the diamond of generosity to shine. Therefore, the solemn followers of spiritual path will be very careful in selecting who to socialize, what to read, and what to watch. Disciples those are still practicing for steadiness should associate the wise until later on, when serenity has been firmly embodied, they might take part in calming down the society. Getting acquainted with confusion when one's mind is still confused itself will only extend the long list of suffering.

Concerning the fate of this country and clenching fist against the corruptor together with their mafia indicate that one's diamond of righteousness is still shimmering. Nevertheless, enlightening the self with the knowledge that all beings desire happiness and despise sadness is what the sages do as well as it is also the refuge of the wise.

Revulsion toward injustice and tyranny indicates the beam of one's heart. However, permitting hatred to be developed into anarchy diminishes the light and drives one away from happiness.

Without being guided by this understanding, every step will draw a being closer toward calamity. A father in England once bestowed a beautiful and calming refuge to his children: "Kids, whatever you become and whatever people call you in the future, don't forget to come home. Return to our home, not mine. Whatever society calls you, generous or fraud, you are my children".

In the midst of sadness, confusion, turmoil, and agitation, people seek refuge in the sense of justice, which might lead to enflame the ember of our national security. In this case perhaps it is necessary to consider returning to the fundamental nature of human being: basic goodness.

The existence of a person might be traced to the embracing and kissing parents. Foods and waters are provided by nature with the abundance of compassion. At the final moments we are also going to be escorted with prayers full of benevolence. Since the beginning, the middle, and the end of human life are full of kindness, isn't it a great pity if a person forgets his or her true self just because of the excessive lust toward power?

*Emanating the ray of service upward,
bringing forth the ray of compassion to the
sides, bestowing guidance downward.*

Authority, Revival, Greatness

“A rich and prosperous country without role model”, is how a Guru described Indonesia in the mid 2010 to his apprentice. On the other hand, Singapore is a very small country yet blessed with citizens who take good care of its nature and social attitude, realizing that the small country is what they have.

Indonesia with thousands of islands is nothing compared with the well organized small country. The question then, as was asked by our ancestors: are natural resources blessings or disasters?

Restoration of Dominance

People in the East know the theory that even a slightest movement of a dragon’s head would stir its body and tail. The former U.S. president of America, George W. Bush provided additional meaning that a mess at the head (the leader) would not just affect the dragon’s own body and tail (the social order and the people) but would bring trouble to other dragons as well.

This issue resulted in urgent question of how humanity shall manage authority in the future. Barack Obama clearly

*We are in need of leaders
with mind construction
firmly rooted inward*

exemplified that with the organized and well controlled head, a dragon, and even other dragons, would have structured body and tail.

The biggest quest so therefore is to determine the root of authority. Great leaders like Mohammad Yunus, Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama, and Mahatma Gandhi possessed the tree of leadership which was strong by its inward root. Perhaps that is why Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in *The Art of Power* that the true power comes from within, implying that a big and strong building will only stand firm when it has deep and strong foundation.

Unfortunately, previous general elections in Indonesia vividly illustrated that power is only interested on the outer things like money, dominance and praise. Related to this a guru once said that those who care merely on money, power and grudge are the poorest among people, hence we can now understand why authority oozes awful smell that triggers opposition in many places. There are a lot of examples on how good people get corrupted once they gain power, as well as instigating another consequence in which those who are faithfully maintaining the purity of their heart prefer to disband and keep distance from authority.

A friend is reasonable when he questioned about what would happen if the clean and pure spirits keep on staying away from power. Would we just let authority continue spreading destruction and decay? As a matter of fact, history also

*When persistent effort is guided
with proper direction, insight will appear*

recollects sincere and world-changing leaders such as George Washington, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Dalai Lama; pure and clean spirits ascended to rearrange authority.

Nevertheless, many people do not realize that the greatness of such leaders did not come cheaply but took a lot of costs instead. Nelson Mandela was isolated and tortured for a quarter of century, Mahatma Gandhi was beaten badly when doing his job as a lawyer. Dalai Lama lost his country at a very young age and took refuge in foreign land for more than fifty years. The question then, is there any leader in Indonesia who would dare to go through such a painful effort, being mocked and ignored to save this country? Would someone dare to go through years of condemnation? Only when a leader stands still over the period of sufferings that revival might finally come.

Three Rays of Authority

Intended or not, we are all painting the future through our discourse, thought, and conduct. It is true that the founding fathers of this country contemplated thousands of years backward when formulating Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika.

Mohammad Yamin and his fellows were certainly aware of the future, while the nervousness and hesitation of our generation toward changes instigates a question on our quality compared to our forefathers.

To answer the necessity, all we need is a leader with mind construction that firmly rooted inward. Therefore, in a chapter of *The True Power*, Thin Nhat Hanh stated the five sources of authority: *faith, diligence, mindfulness, concentration, and insight*. Faith is the first and also the most important thus, while common people usually must see in order to believe, leaders in this path prefer to have faith and see what they believe come to reality.

Nevertheless, a blind faith without efforts is a self deceiving dream. That is the reason why diligence should follow faith. A day or two is not enough for drops of water to affect a rock yet after years perforated it will be. A leader with this quality of perseverance is what we need to fastened the slow bureaucracy we have now.

Just like rowing a boat, faith and diligence are the ones moving the pedals whereas mindfulness and concentration should be the conductors. Eventually, when persistent effort is guided with proper direction, insight will appear.

Beside the five sources of power above, other method is by transforming the dark domination with three rays of authority. The first is upward (toward God, one's superior, etc.) shining the rays of service, worship, and devotion. The second is horizontal and downward (toward fellow human beings and other creations) bringing forth the ray of compassion. The third is inward toward one's self, emitting the ray of diligence. When the three realms (above, middle, and below) have been

illuminated with the rays, darkness (backwardness, poverty, ignorance, hatred, and anger) will naturally disappear.

This is easy to be discussed yet hard to be practiced, especially in the midst of perditions those are so overwhelming that someone wrote about spiritual downfall: when shame absents, the downfall is complete.

The knowledge should guide us in pointing out our next leaders. Choosing the shameless means that Indonesia will be heading to a breakdown while electing the ones who are enlightened by the three rays discussed above implies that our country shall be welcoming the age of glory.

Authority is the opened door to service others, not to take revenge.

Nyoman Dreams to be a President

During Soeharto's presidency there was an idea to make a movie entitled '*Nyoman Becomes a President*' that, however, didn't pass the censorship since at that time the word 'president' was so ridiculously sensitive. Nevertheless, things have changed now and anyone can be the head of this nation.

This circumstance influences all parts of this country that a little kid in Bali named Nyoman also fantasized to be a president. So inspiring was his dream that he performed all his daily activities imagining himself a president.

The relationship between fantasies and dreams is not really clear indeed, yet one night Nyoman dreamt in which he was being elected, giving speech and being inaugurated as a president. As it is common in the East, Nyoman was also taught by the elders to pray in important moments thus in the particular dream he whispered: "Whenever I meet a person, I will consider myself as the most despicable being and deep in my heart I would place others in the most sacred throne". At this point Nyoman was suddenly startled, wondering the source of the impulsive and unprompted prayer. And as if to put the prayer into completion, again he spoke: "When an angry soul comes to me carrying sword of flaming hatred, let me accept him as a rare diamond

*Fire and sword lost their might
in the suppleness of water; fire
cannot scorch and sword cannot slash*

for it is only by passing through the fire of grudge and the sword of hate that children of wisdom and patience shall be born”.

Finishing his pray, all of a sudden Nyoman remembered the practice of guru yoga in which devotion toward one’s master would transform the darkness of doubt into the brilliant light of realization and guidance, thus he proceeded by performing the practice in his dream.

Modesty is Beauty

Western countries with their long list of cultural history teach humanity to be confident. In this perception, a person’s quality is greatly determined by how self-assured he or she is. Take the American presidents as examples; speaking in absolute assurance even when they are making mistake. And this attitude certainly needs to be appreciated as one way of development.

A different way of thinking is carried out within the eastern countries, though this philosophy is currently being forgotten and sometimes even accused as one reason behind many backwardness. It is the eastern elders’ teaching that: “Be modest and you shall be heightened”. An analogy frequently referred in this philosophy is that of the paddy; the fuller its grain is, the lower it bends. Another symbolization is bamboo, which grows straightly upward during its first years but bows humbly when it is stronger.

*Intention is the beginning. Turning it
into habit is the next, followed
by making commitment to stay on track.
Consistency will then wave
the flag of changes*

Once, a student who was doing research in a deep site of Dieng, Java, was called by a local elder. To him the long-bearded and peci-wearing elder whispered: “A wise should go beyond duality instead of being fooled by it (befriend those who praise and hate those who condemn). You should patiently embrace both sides”.

It would be easier to conduct the advice above as we perform modesty in life. Being humble is a disaster for some youths, yet it is beautiful in the eyes of the wise elders for they know that modesty will bring friendship, happiness, peacefulness, and serenity.

Furthermore, the developed minds realize that we are actually many leaves of one tree and a lot of stars in the same sky, and understand that each service we do to others would return to us as a service as well. This is the exceeding of dualities.

Those who travel this way offer their life for service; Mother Theresa helped the dying, Thich Nhat Hanh dedicated his life saving the victims of war, while Mohammad Yunus fought against poverty. It would certainly be easier if this task of servicing is carried out by people with power in hand. In the words of the elders, authority is the door opened for service, not for revenge.

The Birth of Wisdom

It is hard indeed, particularly in this era of turmoil. Still the elders taught that problems exist not to bring us down but to

strengthen like in the old saying “*bad weather makes good timber*”. Even though the fire of hatred and the sword of grudge are lethal, yet the flexibility of water may hush them down. Fire and sword are strong, yet they are incapable against water.

The suppleness of water is frequently used to symbolize wisdom. Water starts its way from the upper course of a river to the ocean through miles of flowing and manages to pass all barriers by its liveness. And, discussing about flexibility, we again must return to the field of service because that is the true nature of leadership.

Education, health, poverty, and backwardness are public segments hungry for hospitality. Health service itself should not merely about free medical treatment but must also take in educational service on its way. In the past, most diseases were caused by unhealthy food while now (as stated by numerous researchers) most of illnesses are caused by ignorance.

The mind is the most essential thing to be cured. However, it should not be conducted by putting more “not to do” lists, for such action will merely extend the turmoil. Providing honest, clean, and clear exemplary is a more useful way in this matter. Lee Kuan Yew was a model. He was denounced in his first years but his consistency of being honest and pure eventually stopped all the yells and shouting.

Related to this, someone wrote: “The inner Science of Transformation: aspiration, habituation, commitment,

consistency". "Intention" is the beginning. The next step is turning the intention into habit, while the third is to make commitment to stay on track. At the end, consistency will wave the flag of changes.

Ah, please pardon the dream. Referring to Sigmund Freud in *The Interpretation of Dream*, for a lot of people dream is indeed nothing more than a part of sleep. Nevertheless, there are also many Sufis and Yogis utilizing dream as an important medium to be connected with the higher realm, thus giving birth to the science known in the East as *dream yoga*.

*For a traveler who has journeyed far into his
or her own self, life is full of fortune.*

The Fortunate Fool

For a number of bright individuals considering themselves appropriate for the seats of ministry, October 2009 was a month of expectation and anxiety. Some started to prophesize their chances and if just allowed, perhaps many would display billboards read "Choose me, I'm smarter!" It is also similar with parents; all of them wish for smart and bright child. At school, no teacher is compliant when their student is called stupid.

Cleverness and Disaster

Thousands of years ago when human started to admire intelligence there was no slightest idea that aptitude might be collaborated with disaster. Study the stormy scandals, terrors and wars that have claimed numerous lives. None of them designed by unintelligent person, instead they were all organized by highly educated people. Anyway, we should not come to conclusion that intelligence is harmful since there are also brainy people with touching kindness. The question then, why cleverness is getting along with foxiness and downfall?

Examine the discourse of the intelligence. Most of them will find arguments and data when their interest is not accommodated and present information supportive to their personal importance. This is the reason behind mass distrust toward the

*Chicken are imprisoned by their
eggshell whereas human beings
by their narrow-mindedness*

intellectuals in the West. In fact, this is one among the forces that gave birth to counter culture and generated intense yearning to Eastern wisdom. The core is the awareness that intellectuality has been getting closer to deceit thus rises profound longing toward honesty, serenity, and simplicity.

The issue appears in the East as well and we may learn something from Thailand. The emerging of intellectuals like Thaksin Shinawatra did bring a temporary economic progress, yet one among the natures of intellectuality is provoking opposition from other intellectuals. Thaksin was then overthrown with scandals, followed by alarming chaos. Malaysia with Anwar Ibrahim's story, Iran which was heated up after the election, and Madagascar with its coup d'états, are merely several symptoms that might bring counter culture into the Eastern lands.

Therefore, without sufficient preparation and sensitivity, Indonesia might also be perplexed by counter culture. See the intellectuals given chance by reformation to make changes. Most of them eventually left the arena in vain while some others even got jailed because of their involvement in corruption. Studying this tendency, detesting or avoiding intellectuality is not the recommended solution. The thing we require is the balance between intellectuality with a proper element: wisdom.

*Just like how the clement and tender
water flows downward, the life of
a modest person is filled
with calmness and gentleness*

The Voice of Wisdom

Javanese elders have a beautiful and moving message: “The fool is defeated by the smart. The smart is overwhelmed by the slick. Both of them are subdued by the fortunate”. Perhaps this is why a lot of Javanese are lucky; if one breaks his bone in an accident it is lucky that he does not killed, if he is killed it is lucky he does not get handicapped.

Some intellectuals would easily label this way of thinking as ‘stupidity’ and mock it with jokes and laughter. However, the wise sees a lucky life as a sign of a person’s deep journey into his or her self. Firstly, it means greediness has been defeated. Secondly, it signifies that the person has disposed his or her self-centeredness. Thirdly, just like the chicks spring from the eggs, he or she is liberated, at least from petty cleverness and misleading slickness.

Therefore, someone said that while chicken are imprisoned by eggshells human beings are by their narrowness. “The difference between the enlightened and the unenlightened is the difference between openness and narrowness” is more or less how the original message sounds. In this respect, there are numerous positions in the government and corporation that long and need to be fulfilled by the fortunate fools (daily living that befriends service and openness. Lucky because service and openness are very easily lead to happiness).

For a number of intellectuals, servicing is only for those of lowly people and openness is often taken with indecisiveness. Such perspective exists because it is the common habit of intellectuality to put one's self in a very high position thus it places service as a dwindling work. Intellectuality has a tendency to put things into boxes where people in the same group are called friends and the others are enemies.

Meanwhile we may see that actually life runs without classification. For instance, if we compare our country to Singapore, Brunei, moreover China, Indonesia is nothing but an abandoned nation. On the other hand, if the standard is Afghanistan (where the citizens have just recently enjoyed the privilege of using cell phones), Kamboja (which the capital has so very few traffic lights), Myanmar (with its poor economy), moreover some African countries where life expectation is only 39 years, Indonesia has a lot of things to be cherished.

Development often forces people to always look up and comparing self with those who have more luck, wealth, higher position, etc. Just like a car that runs without stopping, there will be a point where we are going to be out of breath. The symptoms are actually showing up recently. Terrorists' bombs, malfunction of government's institutes, rivalries between governmental institutions, and humiliation toward the Indonesian Corruption Watch are among others. These might lead to the birth of counter culture which can bring numerous confusions.

At the critical point, the flaming energy of intellectuality needs the rejuvenating water of wisdom to cool down. Working, studying, and praying should be carried out continuously for they keep life on the move, but being grateful is very helpful in preventing our life from getting burnt.

A fortunate fool once said: “Just like cool and tender water flowing downward, so is the life of a modest person; it is filled with tenderness and calmness”.

In a place not dominated by anger, nature shall speak the cosmic language by the coming of butterflies, singing of the frogs, and blooming of the flowers.

A Gift Each Day

A lot of people are questioning the main reason for wealthy persons to be happy. The rich certainly do not have any problem with daily expenses and buyable pleasures, plus they can do (or get) many things in very easy and simple ways.

In the midst of materialism, some persons believe that the life of the rich consists only of joys, and how untrue that thought is! Within the abundance of both moneys and debts, happiness still comes and goes like a guest. Happiness for the haves is also like the sun that rises in the morning and downs in the afternoon. Forbidding the sun to descend will only turn someone into a victim of mockery and disappointment.

Anyway, victims of this misconception are countless; a newly promoted officer who thinks the bliss is going to last forever, a rich person who believes that wealth is everlasting, and many others. Meanwhile, the nature simply states that nothing is eternal.

Therefore the wise educate themselves to flow with the streams of life. They also work, struggle, and pray, but they greet whatever life brings with smile on their lips. Being promoted is

*The light of the true happiness
emanates when a soul finds
joy in cherishing others*

nice since it signifies one's trustworthiness, yet being demoted is also beautiful for it bestows the chance to practice sincerity. In the language of the divine, it is sincerity that makes life rests in eternity.

A president director of a bank once told me in Bali airport about the great happiness he felt when his child was being graduated from a university. This is perhaps just an ordinary matter to parents who have experienced several graduation ceremonies of their children, but for the first-timers such event really brings pride. Their mind is filled with beautiful images; watching their child wearing graduation outfit, shaking hand with university representative, and thundering claps of hands. All are beautiful, and everyone who has freed him or her self from envy will also smile with empathy.

However, back to the word of the nature previously mentioned, all bend to the law of impermanence. Everything comes and goes. Consequently, many spiritual disciples who travel into their own selves begin to realize that calmness might only be achieved by befriending life. It is easy to get along with succeeding career, but only the wise can take up a downfall. A master said that: happiness and unhappiness come from your unbalanced mind.

This is why a lot of people in Bali spend their time sweeping and swabbing the floor. Not because they cannot afford paying housekeeper but because they are educating themselves to make friends with the modest kind of life.

*By subduing anger and developing
compassion, we are presenting
daily gift to our loved ones*

The first applications of such practice might not bring any effect, but just as continuous drips of water will perforate a rock, the persistent performance of humbleness shall produce impact as well.

Similar to those who experience numerous years as high rank officers in corporation or government, authority often forces us to wear the masks of vanity, arrogance, and anger with the excuse of maintaining control or effectiveness of autonomy.

However, after years the masks become parts of our selves. Like raising a tiger in the bedroom, eventually the keeper will be tormented and consumed by the beast of arrogance. At this point people need modesty to take their feet back to the ground.

Sweeping, swabbing, tidying the garden, helping wife with the dishes, assisting children with their home works, are a number of activities those are simple yet rejuvenating. They bring happiness to the husbands and the wives, development to the children, and keeping away arguments from home. Furthermore, in every environment not heavily polluted with anger and conflict, nature will speak the cosmic expressions by the coming of butterflies, singing of the frogs, and blooming of the flowers.

It might be the reason for Lama Zopa Rinpoche to write the following line in *How to be Happy: The sun of real happiness shines in your life only when you start to cherish others*. The determined travelers of this path will feel the true calmness and serenity every time they give service to other being.

Thus in another page of the particular work Lama Zopa Rinpoche bequeathed the following message: If you want to be loved, love others first. Calm, serene, tender, and beautiful are the rewards of such livelihood.

As what happens in every circle of life, not all persons are interested to learn about calmness and serenity. In the river there is the gentle water as well as the hard rocks, and both are present to sketch a picture of exquisiteness.

Fellows who have not realized this point, moreover still dominated by the masks of authority, will believe that helping husbands are afraid of their spouse. Such perspective does not need to be argued, the important point is to understand that when we cannot be provoked, when we do not hurt but give our affection and service instead, we are actually giving daily present to our loved ones.

Cooperate to complete each other, for there is where the secret of perfection lies.

The One-Winged Birds

Once upon a time, Nasrudin put his questions before God: "Why am I gifted with such a beautiful wife?" Passionately God answered: "That was why you chose her." Unconvinced, again Nasrudin murmured: "Not only beautiful, she is also kind-hearted!" The answer was not so different: "That was also why you chose her." Taking the chance when God was so responsive, Nasrudin delivered yet another question: "But... why my wife is so stupid?" Again, God kindly replied: "That, my devotee, was why she chose you."

The illustration above portrays human's life that loves the good and hates the bad, which is simply impossible because "good" and "bad" are two sides of a coin. While the greedy wants to have only the good things, the wise learns to smile to whatever happens in life. Analogically, the imperfection of life is similar to the one winged birds that can only fly when they are embracing each other; something which is easier to do by those who practice accepting the disadvantages.

Just like the nature, the day is beautiful with the night as its pair. The sun and the stars are cooperating harmonically; the sun shines the earth at noon while the stars beautifully brighten the black night. They work together cordially, as if telling humanity

*Spirituality means doing no harm
and developing compassion*

to cooperate in fulfilling each other for there is where the secret of perfection lies.

Claiming of being perfect, needing no help of the others, are more than just a lie or arrogance; it is a downfall. H.H. Dalai Lama is unique. While numerous masters relate success to conversion, H.H. Dalai Lama, who was granted Nobel price for peace in 1989 states: “You don’t need to be religious in order to be spiritual”. Being spiritual doesn’t mean changing faith from one to another. It simply means caring and not hurting.

With this guideline, lots of us will be spiritual; from directors to cleaning service workers, especially because in compassion human beings are embracing each other and fly together. Men with their masculinity desire women with their femininity, irritable superiors need patient assistants. This is the sign of perfection, which does not reside in greed toward the positive and rejection to the negative.

Most supervisors are irritable, in particular because anger frequently helps managing the organization. Besides that, a quarter of their salary is to pay their anger; a kind of medical expense when they catch stroke later on.

Actually, anger can be managed, in particular if the person find happiness in compassion and avoid causing harm. Notice a fellow’s argument as follow: “When anger vanishes enemies disappear.”

*The true companions for development
are those who attack one's flaws*

Anyway, anger is not something to be kicked off. It is not something that we should get rid out of our life. Anger is actually a voice from within; with proper management, it is guidance as well.

Examine persons or situations that arouse anger, recognize the pattern and note the tendency. Then you may behold the secret that anger is a kind of energy. Like fire, it is beneficial when used in proper time, place, and purpose.

Respectful subordinators, neighbors that know their limit, obedient children, are among the fruits of well-managed anger. Some even go further, as a meditation instructor says: "The best spiritual friend is the one who attacks your hidden faults". This is especially because such persons educate us to be patient and wise. So kind they are that they take the consequence of hell to teach us lessons. In this perspective, we can now understand some masters' message to love those who hurt us.

It needs to be understood that someone who hurts other is actually in suffer, and his or her anger will only lengthen the sorrow. When we change the label "bad person" into "miserable person" then the energy aroused will be the compassionate one instead of anger. This is what the wise does hence they might smile even when they are being abused.

When it rains, chicken take shelter under the trees while ducks plunge themselves into ponds. And they are happy in their own way.

The True Sanctuary

In my childhood, one activity both entertaining and tiring was marching exercise. In the middle of exhaustion, the instructor's order to stay at ease sounded so relaxing and comforting.

In different degree, nowadays life is similarly crowded with constant rush. In the morning people are hurrying to get to their office. In the office, they are at race to meet the target. In career they are hunted by the ambition to get promoted while at home they are pursued by the increasing life standard.

The above exposition clearly illustrates modern life which is hasty and restless. Some fellows don't rest until they got stroke, hospitalized, or perhaps until they have been treated at the nursing home. Even then, when their body is forced to take a break, their mind still does a lot of wonderings; imagining things they could do if only they were still healthy and energetic. It is a typical nature of a mind which is still in a rush.

There is a story about a child named Peter. Getting bored with his easy life as a wealthy and smart kid, one day he went to a forest and asked a wizard there for a time machine. The wizard

*The true sanctuary is
the return to one's own nature*

granted the wish in condition that the device could only take the possessor into the future, not into the past.

Using the machine Peter first jumped to his high school period where he joyfully found himself a teenager with an attractive girlfriend.

After two weeks of delight he got bored and decided to go into his old age, discovering himself a happy householder with a beautiful wife and two children. Again his enjoyment did not stay long thus he went further into the future where he was suddenly awakened in a miserable condition at a nursing house. His wife had already passed away, and he did not know where his children are.

Suddenly Peter realized that he had missed so many wonderful moments of present moment because of his greed, by his viewing life as a race. Speaking frankly, Peter's story is ours as well. It is a tale of a life exhausted by rushing away and restlessness.

It was told that once upon a time, animals envied human's education and agreed to establish a school of their own. The birds taught flying subject, the wolves handled running class, while the fishes were the mentors of swimming course. After years of fruitless and exhausting efforts, they eventually realized that all creatures have their own nature. Flying is the way of the birds, running the wolves, and swimming the fishes. Referring to a Zen story, during the rain chicken will take shelter under the

*Resting in the present moment is
the best preparation to embrace the future*

trees while ducks plunge themselves into ponds. Both take different ways, yet both are happy with it.

This is the true sanctuary, the return to our own nature. Housewives rest in the present reality of being housewives, directors in the present condition of being directors. The sense of having a rest itself is incredibly simple; answering the call of daily life as best as we can, look at the cherishing sides, then cultivate life thus it becomes beautiful with profound gratitude.

For the old timers, even sleeping with fussy grannies might become a refuge. It is natural for menopause women to be emotionally unstable and, as Socrates praised his wife as the best trainer of his temper, husbands being tempted by menopause spouse are being guided to patience and wisdom.

Therefore, someone said that the past is like a cancelled check and the future is like an untimely giro. The only cash in hand is the now, thus it is called The Present. Whoever has been taking a rest in the present is in truth doing the best preparation available to embrace the future.

The reason for one's supremacy is to be used in protecting and serving life.

Young, Rich, Famous

After the confession of former American president Bill Clinton's sex scandal years ago, the second next similar affair that also drew the world's attention was that of the celebrated golf player Tiger Woods'. Life is truly meaningful that the chime of understanding might also be tolled by badness, darkness, and impureness as well as righteousness, truthfulness, and earnestness.

Tiger Wood is indeed phenomenal. Not only he stayed for years as the world's number one golfer, but he also gained the particular prestige in a very young age. As the result, he fits the classification of world's idol: young, rich, famous.

And as a tall tree shall fall in time, Tiger Woods was also collapsed by gossip. Even worse, besides of the nasty reports he was nearly killed in a car accident.

This story vividly illustrates that people need preparation not only to become poor but to become rich and famous as well. Without enough preparation, maturity, and wisdom, richness and famousness may turn into curses like what already happened to a lot of people.

*Practicing martial art
means exercising modesty*

Many husbands don't have other choice but to be faithful to their wife when they are poor. However, upon financial abundance, faithfulness flies as light as feathers. Some women who have numerous deficiencies are very faithful to their husbands, while many of those with plenty of advantages (beauty, wealth, fame) bring woe to their spouse.

No one forbids us from pursuing superiority and improvement, yet, considering a fallen life like Tiger Wood's, perhaps this is the right moment to contemplate deeply thus advantages do not turn into wretchedness.

In the East there is a story of a humble martial artist. One day, on his way home he was confronted at the gate of his village by a gang of drunken scoundrels. Understanding his opponents, the holder of third degree black just smiled as he refused the provocation to fight.

Because of the negation, the crooks ordered him to crawl under their thighs and without any hesitation the martial art master did what he was ordered to do.

A few nights later, the village was attacked by hundreds of mounted robbers. The humble martial artist easily fought and drove the villains out. Admiring his outstanding skill, one of the scoundrels asked: "Why didn't you just fight us that day?"

Smilingly the master replied that superiority and martial art skill are not to be shown-off, moreover to satisfy the ego, but to

*Karate is the way to keep on smiling
toward whatever may come in one's life*

protect and serve life instead. This is the wonderful light of understanding that prevents superiority to turn into doom. Use it as an instrument of serving others. In the language of the Eastern masters, practicing martial art means practicing to be humble.

Therefore, when a Karate master in Okinawa was questioned about the meaning of his art, smilingly he answered: “Karate means keep smiling all the time”. And when one of his disciples nearly got into fight with a drunken American soldier, the master swiftly intervened. He held his student, hugged the soldier, put a smile on his lips and said “Welcome to Okinawa. May you be happy!”.

In this way, not only the fight was avoided, but supremacy does not turn into tragedy.

*An alchemist transforms iron into gold.
Compassion turns suffering into greatness.*

Painting the Rainbow

During a time of financial hardship in college years, a friend mentioned about the cheapest boarding house ever with five rooms. After listening to my keen interest to check it out, the friend said that all of the five are bathrooms.

When there is nothing identical in the realm of jokes, moreover in the real world. Life is so colorful just like a football team. In Gibran's poetical words, a man having a talk with happiness in the living room is being expected by sadness in the bedroom. We inhabit this house of life together with joy and sorrow thus the greed to accept ecstasy and reject misery is both violating the law of nature and prolonging the list of sorrow.

Under the dark shadow of greed happiness is also an ingredient of suffering, particularly because it develops addiction and fear (of losing it). In reality, happiness comes and goes apart from it is being accepted or denied. It is like how the sun will still raise no matter we want it or not.

Aware of the unbending law of changes, the wise train themselves not to be attached to happiness nor disappointed by sadness. One should indeed be grateful for promotion and increase of salary, yet he or she should keep in mind that in time such things shall pass. Disease and deficit certainly bring

*Someone must paint the rainbow
thus diversity will not always
lead to disagreement*

concern, but remember that they also provide lessons to learn. Misery is a guide escorting travelers to the temple of modesty where souls are initiated into greatness.

The essence of the message is to find the bliss hidden within the heart of sorrow. This quest is easier to be accomplished by those who are skillful in painting the rainbow; a thing made beautiful by its various colors (happiness – sadness, success – failure, praise – condemn) and the most essential resource to make this work easier is compassion.

Notice the following message from a meditation instructor: “Like iron transformed into gold, the alchemy of compassion transforms samsaric actions into happiness”. Whereas an ascetic can turn iron into gold, compassion can transform suffering into greatness. Emanating compassion upon the time of happiness is easy but doing it in time of condemnation can only be performed by the venerable beings.

Those who are able to paint the rainbow within their selves might one day get an opportunity to paint it outside. Diversity exists in every thing, between nations and even within a family. A fuzzy woman usually marries a calm man; a furious supervisor wishes for a patient subordinate; while a greedy owner requires a caring leader.

This is not only a law of nature and an ingredient of success but also a path to enlightenment. In this way, a practitioner needs to observe the nature as the representative of perfection. Firstly, it

*Wisdom is like the sheltering sky
while compassion is the serving earth*

is forever-changing. Secondly, nature paints beauty through numerous diversities like the sea, mountain, river, and lake. Thirdly, it is a source for both blessing and misfortune.

Life is similar as well. It is impermanent, formed by various elements, and it includes both prosperity and calamity. In the hands of the skillful rainbow painters, all are captured into a beautiful picture. In a word of a daughter who loves her father because of his devotion in sharing compassion, it is that: "There must be someone who paints the rainbow daddy!" In truth, someone must paint the rainbow thus diversity does not always lead to controversy.

Heed the message of Lama Yeshe: "Purification requires a skillful combination of wisdom and compassion". Wisdom is like the infinite sky sheltering all beings while compassion is serving all beings like the earth.

No matter how painful your body is and how burdened your spirit be, never see a being as a foe for one's true enemy is misconception.

Survival of the Kindest

An experienced teacher once said that fighting toddlers will be hugging each other within minutes whereas high school students need much more time to make peace. This illustrates that as we are getting older we are harder to forgive.

This is also the one makes cooperation among people become a complicated matter. Arranging collaboration between companies is even more difficult, and you can imagine how it is to make it between nations.

It does not necessarily mean that education and experience are dangerous. While indeed some education and experience turn people into fanatics, yet some others produce humble and open-minded persons.

It is difficult to find an individual who is educated, experienced, and open-minded altogether, because education tends to put people between walls where they call their roommates as friends and people in the other room as foes, and thus causing conflicts and wars around the world.

*When we are being generous in fact
we do not only help others but
also educate ourselves to be better.
And it is through this kindness
that one day we shall find our salvation*

A Being is Never an Enemy

Being concerned with this issue, a disciple consulted his master and the sage gently gave his counsel: “However hurt your body is, however burdened your spirit is, never see a being as an enemy for one’s real adversary is misconception.”

Comprehending the essence of this message, the developed souls cease their clash with any being and gradually disentangle misunderstandings with generosity instead of arguments. Like the message of Javanese elders that Javanese characters “die” [*paten*] when seated on a lap [*pangkon*]. “*Pangkon*” means to be treated as a human being. The one perishes here is not the physical body but the ego.

The death of the ego is the birth of the higher self whose only desire is to help. “Helping is happiness” is the philosophy possessed by this kind of being. Sister Chan Khong in *Learning True Love* mentions that if she got married she could only serve several children but by being unattached she can save thousands of kids. In her autobiography of service, the readers may distinguish how this gentle lady begging here and there to rebuild houses devastated by bombs, medicating the orphans, and taking them back to their schools in Vietnam.

The most amazing thing is that in one page of this beautiful book she whispers that when she was asking for material help actually she was also educating the donators to awaken the generosity within their selves.

*Keep on giving, and see your expression
getting gentler each time*

It can be obviously seen in every act of benevolence that not only the receiver but the giver also obtains benefit from the act. In fact, the giver even acquires greater advantage: the death of ego and the birth of benevolence. In this path, the formula “generosity is complete in itself” truly works. A gift is already perfect just by being given. Without being calculated, billed, or expected. Once, a master also wrote that “the very purpose of spiritual practice is to serve others”.

The Birth of Generosity

As has been neatly portrayed in the movie *Pay It Forward*, one generous act can propagate until it is able to transform a lot of people in a community. If numerous leaders diligently sow the seeds of generosity by giving example as role models, providing lands for the institutions that appreciate hospitality, and pouring the seeds with the appropriate reward, how beautiful the professional world would be.

The falling down of family institution and the heating up of inter-human relationship will be affected as well. Those who walk this path with determination shall realize that eventually it is only generosity that saves. Compassion is the best protection. This is what is meant by survival of the kindest. The last persons standing will be those who practice compassion.

This does not have to be conducted in spectacular ways. A westerner woman in Ubud (an area in Bali Island) feeds stray dogs every day, cashiers do not cheat the costumers' change,

husbands help their wife cleaning the dishes when the servant is away, mothers find both happiness and delight by loving their child, and non-Moslems help securing empty houses during Idul Fitri holidays.

Repeating the message above, when we do generosity in fact we do not only helping others but also educating our selves to be better. And it is this kindness that one day will save us.

Pay attention to a master's message: "Keep on giving, and see your expression getting gentler each time."

Essentially, not only their expression; their life is also getting gentler in many ways. Husbands, wives, and everything else look gentle all the time because as soon as one sees through the spectacles of compassion he or she shall no longer behold other expressions save tenderness.

Second Anthology

Enlightenment in the Moment

Prayer is not a composition of words fulfilled with demands but a realization that the seeker and the one being sought after are actually never been apart.

Homecoming, Cheerfulness, Happiness

It is a routine in Indonesian kindergarten to conclude each day's activity singing a song entitled "*Gelang Sipatu Gelang*". Cheerfulness, happiness, and joyfulness are the sentiments felt by the students, regardless of what they are going to eat or play at home later.

Years after the childhood's end, life starts to get exhausted and many among us wonder where have they lost the old-day joyful energy of homecoming. Many adults go home each evening, but without feeling the excitement they used to experience in their childhood. Each weekend a lot of people take a rest at home, but only with the smallest amount of contentment.

Comparing today's life complicated with desires to simple yet happy days of the past is indeed unfair. The past is the past, the now is the now, and they have their own lesson to teach. Nevertheless, it is so human to question what, whereas body has a resting place called home, is the resting place for life?

*The most touching life is
the one filled with service*

That is the issue of many people, especially those who start to get worn out. They so therefore try to find sanctuary in prayer, service, compassion, and in many other ways.

Prayer is indeed a wonderful haven and there are various kinds of prayer that people make; from husbands praying so their wives might stop being fussy, wives expecting promotion for their husbands, until greedy people asking to get better car than their neighbor's. Among others, Jalalludin Rumi had an extraordinarily wonderful prayer. In one corner of his life, this Sufi mystic wrote: "Years and years I knocked on that door in vain. When it was at last opened, I realized that I knocked from the inside".

Only a few are capable to reach Rumi's outstanding level of prayer and most of us are standing outside by our asking this and that; the kind of prayer that does not open the door. With prayer of such nature the deliverer shall stay out in the cold because when the wish does come true the happiness is just passing by and soon arrive other desires. That is the one making the story of souls freezing outside. In the hands of an amazing seeker like Rumi, prayer is not a composition of words fulfilled with demands but a realization that the seeker and the one being sought after are actually never been apart. Rumi was the kind of soul finding the way home through the path of prayer.

Saint Francis of Assisi was among the souls taking the path of service. Note a quotation of his poem: "My love, allow me to be your servant of peacefulness. Wherever darkness presents may I

*If you have to choose between religion
and compassion, go for compassion*

come carrying candle of enlightenment. In the place burnt with the fire of rage, let me sprinkle the holy water of compassion". This is similar to Mahatma Gandhi who mentioned that the most thrilling life is the one filled with service.

H.H. Dalai Lama is of another kind for his homecoming is through the path of compassion. While many people practice meditation to immediately liberate themselves from the sorrowful circle of worldly life, the receiver of the 1989 Nobel Prize for peace frequently sheds tears before the public when he utters his promise: "As long as there is space, as long as there is creation, may I be borne in this place thus I may guide beings out of misery".

In relation to this, he never tired of repeating the message that: "If I have to choose between religion and compassion, I will choose compassion".

The readers are welcome to choose their own way home. Actually, the paths (of prayer, service, and compassion) are like the Coke advertisement that says "*Anywhere, anytime, with anyone*", means that in any place (at home, office, etc.) there are abundant opportunities to find the way home. The requirement is simple; providing helping hands or at least renouncing the self from hurting others.

Those who have intimately embraced life and found peace do not only smile with their lips but with their eyes as well (perceiving life with profound understanding).

The Smiling Eyes

Upon witnessing the global chaos, an acquaintance once asked: “When will people cease hurting themselves by attacking and devastating each other?” America that used to be a role model of democracy and human rights is so deep in confusion now. After the 11th of September attack, there has been an increasing number of blasphemies in the name of religion, and incalculable number of fund has been turned into deadly bullets in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indonesia has experienced hundreds of years of miserable period under occupation, decades of development, as well as more than ten years of reformation, yet there is still no sign that this nation has become calmer, gentler, and more civilized.

In the midst of such uproar, where are the residing place of serenity and clarity? As the beginning of the contemplation, observe the mighty ocean. All of them have waves and rejecting the waves is equal to rejecting the ocean itself. It is the same with life. In the long course of history, all life consists of waves and there has never been any period free from twists and turns.

*All have their own space and time. Exactly
like pine trees on the hills and
coconut trees on the beaches.*

Study the world's history in the last few decades. There was time when humanity was horrified by the First World War, yet the fear did not prevent the next battle, which then triggered the cold war between two superpower countries. After the fall of Russia, followed by America's supremacy, humanity thought that the fear was about to be ended. Yet the blow of the terrorist bombs started a new beginning of strain, which is not between nations but between humanity versus the terrorist.

Taken into conclusion, life is indeed similar to the ocean. Throughout times (past, present, and future), life is always wavy and suffering happens when human desires ocean but despises the waves. Refusing the waves (the ups and downs of life) equals to rejecting the ocean (life), and as obviously perceptible in any ocean, all waves humbly bow upon their kissing the lips of the shoreline.

Problem, turmoil, and war are waves, and they will cease in time. Moreover, just like how waves do not vanish upon touching the seashore but lash back to the ocean instead, life is keep on circling with its law. Refusing the law means suffering while embracing it gratefully is both peacefulness and clarity.

Those who have intimately embraced life and found peace do not only smile with their lips but with their eyes as well (perceiving life with profound understanding). Hearing young people with their noisy motorcycles on the street, they will whisper: "In the past I have been given space by the older ones

*Life is cycling with the law of balance.
Those who enjoy a lot of pleasures
must pay with a lot of efforts*

to grow, and now it is my turn to give room for the growth of others”.

Seeing thoughtless subordinate in the office, a voice will be heard inside their heart: “All have their own space and time. Exactly like pine trees on the hills and coconut trees on the beaches, the presence of feeble-minded people is not to trigger annoyance but to make a supervisor more compassionate from time to time”.

Trapped in Jakarta’s traffic jam, again the inner teacher whispers: “Life is revolving with the law of balance (day – night, quiet – noisy, etc.). Those who enjoy a lot of pleasures (especially in big cities) must pay with a lot of efforts”. Finally, far before emotion enflamed by anger and annoyance, the eyes have countered it with an enchanting smile. This is what often referred to by a number of meditation instructors as the right view (smiling sight).

The main reason for their strength is because they sturdily roots inward, into friendship and gratitude toward the blessings of life.

The Singing of the Bamboo

Once upon a time, the bamboos in the woods envied the good fortune of the flute because of its sound that attracts people's admiration and represents beauty. Feeling the depth of the jealousy, the flute explained: "Dear friends. I used to be a bamboo like what you are now. In order to become a flute my feet were cut, my body was smoothened by a sharp knife, and the most painful of all, my chest was pierced".

In fact, the life course of the supreme beings is the same. None among them has straight and easy journey. Some were almost killed (like Nelson Mandela), and some others really were killed (like Mahatma Gandhi and John Lennon). The unfair thing is that many people assume the life of great persons becomes amazing without trial and temptation.

This is the source of the envy. If only people know how dangerous such life is, perhaps most of them will prefer to comfortably remain as ordinary persons. Still, that is the common nature of numerous lives; similar to the danger of electricity, they only believe after being stung.

*Because there is no life which is always
wealthy and happy, then it is worth
to consider learning to
be delightful in every step*

This explains why most of young people are so highly-spirited and energetic thus they are involved in numerous energy consuming activities such as studying at school, taking private lessons, getting involved in organization, looking for scholarship, and many others. The main idea is that they should be able to do everything that others can. This kind of belief is also the one causing a number of motivators encourage people to rush for the wealth. Anthony Robbin, for an example, entitled his work *Awakening the Giant Within*.

The premise of people taking this way is very clear. First, nothing is impossible. Second, the potency within the self is unlimited, thus equal to a giant. Third, the higher livelihood that can be achieved the better. And those who have been developed in wisdom will smile in understanding. In life, some things might be achieved while some others can only be accepted in gratitude. Some parts of life might be pursued with works and efforts whereas some others remain belong to the mystery.

At this level of understanding, preventing young people from doing energetic efforts is certainly not a wise option. As pine trees that grow on the hills and coconut trees on the beaches, let them grow according to their degree of maturity. However, for the long-timers, not only their perfume has been replaced with eucalyptus oil, perhaps it will be useful listening to the chant of the bamboo.

Study the bamboos. They are strong, steady, and will never be wrenched by the wind. The main reason for their strength is

*The exceptionality of emptiness is that
as soon as it springs it will naturally
bring service, as simple as water
causes wetness and fire brings heat*

because they strongly roots inward. This is different to a number of human beings whose lives are weak and corrupted, mainly because they root outward (position, wealth). This point inspires to learn growing with the manner of rooting inward, into friendship and gratitude toward the blessings of life.

Secondly, bamboo is always fresh in every season, different to common people those are sparkling only when they have a lot of money, get promotion, and praised. And because there is no life which is always wealthy and happy, then it is worth to consider learning to be delightful in every step. Being rich is pleasant because a lot of creations can be aided by wealth while being broke is beautiful as well for through poverty people do not need to fear lost. Getting promoted is charming since it is full of compliments while retirement is also wonderful as there are plenty of times to be allocated for doing benevolent acts.

The third song of the bamboos is that when they have reached certain height they always humbly bow. Whoever conducting the same attitude is treasuring a deposit for his or her fall in the future.

And the summit of the bamboo story is that when it is cut open it is hollow inside. Speaking frankly, many lives are easily stressed, agitated, and irritated because in the inside they are full of things such as pride, wealth, and social status. Thus, as soon as someone acts differently to their expectation, the temptation to be furious will emerge. And the bamboos teach

that all the great things that make human easily lost their temper will one day vanish with emptiness.

The exceptionality of emptiness is that as soon as it springs it will naturally bring service. This is as simple as water causing wetness and fire bringing heat. Exactly like bamboos; they are empty inside yet continuously serving life by sharing airiness in every season.

Those who flow perfectly with dualities (birth – death, up – down, praised – condemned) without any resistance are immediately liberated.

Bowing Respectfully to Life

Not many people like to stay in Jakarta during Idul Fitri holiday. Besides of the quietness, the absent of housekeeper makes life at home full of struggles. In a bad day one might be yelled by exhausted wife or shouted by starving children.

However, those who travel into their own selves and see everything as guidance will ask themselves: how to transform difficulties into development materials? Sweeping the floor is indeed exhausting, moreover washing clothes and cooking. Addiction to comfort often forces people to evade such things.

Nevertheless, a progressing student will not be absent in examination and a spiritual disciple will not run away from trouble. Inspired by this, some people learn not to escape the inconvenience of Jakarta during Idul Fitri holiday and regard everything as objects of meditation.

Sweeping is actually an amazing kind of self purification. After doing it, not only the floor is clean but the mind is also purified from greed, anger, and hatred. After cooking we can eat as well as we might also see an illustration of life. Rice is eaten, some turn into energy while some others into waste. This waste then

*Happiness is indeed charming but it
does not teach much lesson. Sadness
is certainly frightening but there
are so many souls whose lives are
made starry by passing
through mountains of sorrow*

processed by mother Earth into paddy. This is the circle of life. Those who flow perfectly with it (birth – death, up – down, praised – condemned) without any resistance are immediately liberated.

Referring to Thich Nhat Hanh's opinion in *Peace Is Every Step*, all things we do in life (waking up, washing face, brushing teeth, having meal, etc.) carried out with complete awareness will make everything vivid and clear. Darkness, hatred, anger, and greed vanish when the light of mindfulness emerges.

“When negative emotion appears just be aware of it, do not react”, said a meditation instructor. Once the emotion illuminated by the understanding that all of us want happiness and do not want sadness, it will triggers desire to share loving-kindness. Some wail that anger does not recede with prayer. This can be understood because humanity has been staying in the darkness for too long thus it takes a strong and firm practice of awareness to dispel all of the obscurity. This might take a decade, two, or even more. It is not the time that matters, since the opportunity to enter the stream of mindfulness has already deserved gratification on its own.

Everyone is welcome to choose his or her own path and method. Every serious seeker knows that practice does not require specific time and place because each moment and space presents enlightening material. The opportunity to practice mindfulness even exists in the most feared moment (death). Only a few people do profound contemplation in happiness but

*Like a lotus that stays in the water
without getting wet and lives in
the mud unsoiled. Such ability
to flourish in poor environment
without being affected is the one
enables people to bow to life as it is*

before death people do not have other choice but to reflect and ponder.

Pay attention to what Ezra Bayda wrote in *At Home in the Muddy Water*: “May we exist like a lotus. At home in the muddy water. Thus we bow to life as it is”. Masters with profound practice also experience ups and downs (healthy – sick, praised – condemned, etc.) but they remain untouched. They are exactly like lotus that stays in the water without getting wet and lives in the mud unsoiled. This is what enables them to bow to life as it is. To those who have arrived here, the absent of housekeeper during Idul Fitri holidays and other temptations in life are not the beginnings of pain but the opened doors to perform more advanced practice.

Happiness is indeed charming but it does not teach anything. Sadness is certainly frightening but there are so many souls whose lives are made starry by passing through mountains of sadness.

In the beginning there are two (the worshipper and the worshipped). Serenity, heartiness, and acquiescence turn the two into one. After a long time in unity, even the one vanishes as well.

Two, One, Empty

A youth asks his uncle about the kind of business that can make a person rich in six months. Smiling understandingly his uncle replies: “When there is any, I will take it first!”.

Frankly speaking, that is the attitude of nowadays people; expecting things to be instant. At school people want to be graduated immediately, at work they want to be promptly promoted, and the entrepreneurs want to be rich as soon as possible. Don't they realize that the faster they are graduated and promoted the nearer also they toward stroke and death?

It is inappropriate to speak about other person's weakness. The obvious point is; the nature as educator speaks that the higher the mountain the steeper the cliff. Behind a towering superiority hides deep shortcoming. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people desire only the summit and despise the ravine.

Realizing this expression of life, the wise then leave the dream of wealthy teen age and happy old age. In the experience of the wise, youth is the time to study and work. In case that there is a moment to pray in the life of the youths, mostly we can faintly

*Happiness is the fruit of sincerity
in giving, exactly like a white
bird in the snow; helping but yet unseen.*

hear the song of their personal interest as the background of the prayer.

Those who have passed adolescence will smile shyly when remembering their days as youngsters. In the past, when one is still around twenty or thirty years old, the energy is in its prime, desire to be number one is so intense, eyes are always set on beautiful women, if only there was a job to paint the sky it would surely be taken with absolute confidence. That is how a youth is.

A wise old-timer once said that he used to think himself a fighting aircraft flying swiftly with all glory in the sky, capable of accomplishing many magnificent achievements. However, after numerous ups and downs and illnesses, he eventually realized that he is only a happy old motorcycle.

Javanese elders have a beautiful and touching message. The summit of life is reached when someone begins to discover his or her self. With this knowledge of the self as the principal, the song of personal interest eventually vanishes. In the beginning it will be substituted by the song of embracing the present moment, later it will be changed into the tone of gratitude, and in the end there shall be no more song to sing. Only the touching silent remains.

In one corner of life, the inner master once spoke that in the beginning there are two (the worshipper and the worshipped). Serenity, heartiness, and acquiescence turn the two into one.

*When the practice of helping others
is continuously performed without
any desire to be praised or regarded
as a saintly being, this "one"
disappears in silence like
a white bird in the snow*

After a long time in unity, even the one disappears as well. Related to this, someone wrote: The best theologian is the one who never speaks about God. Not because atheism or moreover hatred toward God, but because mentioning God means that there are still two entities.

Pay attention to what Ezra Bayda wrote in *At Home in the Muddy Water*: “The joy of relationship ultimately comes from effortlessly giving ourselves to others, like a white bird in the snow”. That is the daily life of a soul who has left the numbers one and two. In the past, joyfulness indeed comes from giving something to one’s own self. At this stage, happiness is the fruit of serenity to give to others, exactly like a white bird in the snow; helping but unseen! The beauty of this stage is unimaginable. And this kind of people may wear many kinds of outfit such as security officer that helps opening the door at a bank, a taxi driver, or an important functionary of the government, but they share one thing in common that happiness means providing help because it is the matter that makes human moves from two to one. When this activity is continuously performed without any desire to be praised or regarded as a saintly being, this “one” disappears in silence like a white bird in the snow.

Spiritually, because the mind has been lightened from desires, life starts to converse with the vibrations of prayer.

The Beautiful Aging

Even though Deepak Chopra once wrote a book entitled *Grow Younger Live Longer* and there was a medical faculty held post-graduate program on anti-aging, yet the truth that everything grows old can not be denied. Pay attention to the melting ice in the poles, anomaly of the weather, and the global disasters; all are symptoms of the aging universe.

Trying to resist the law of aging will only extend the long list of sufferings. Illness, stress, depression, or even conflict with other party might become the results of such resistance.

Therefore, the wise seriously prepare themselves so they can grow old beautifully. In contrast to most people's way of life which is characterized by numerous resistances, in the path of the sages happiness is closer to the quality of someone's acceptance toward life. Work, effort, prayer are still their daily menus, yet flowing with the blessing of life is the one that is cherishing and liberating.

Therefore someone wrote that resisting the wheel of life is suffering while flowing perfectly with it is liberation. The main obstacle in making life flows is the desire to be more than other people. More saving, higher position, more fame, and more

*In the old age, nothing left
but the desire to love*

luxurious car, while the nature speaks that the sun can not make itself always brighter than the moon and the moon cannot make itself always brighter than the stars. All have their own time and period.

On being promoted, fill the time with a lot of services because it is the one that determines how beautiful the fall later. When lower position must be taken, greet it as the abundance of time to pray and help others. When healthy, do a lot of prayers and works. When sick, see it as a payment for the past mistakes.

Those are the assets for a beautiful aging. Time will still roll with ups and downs, happiness and sadness, success and failure, but it has lost its grip, which is substituted by sincerity to whatever happens in life. In the language of the elders, in the old age only sincerity that is cherishing as well as liberating.

A lot of youths ask; is there any particular preparation in order to have the elegant aging? Along with the law of nature, in the young age (below 40) take the heavy burdens of life such as the struggle in education, the building of a career, the commencing of a marriage, managing the finance, and so on. Analogized as carrying burdens, take the heavy ones in the prime time of the physical condition.

Later when the strength and health have been reduced, the burdens left are only the lighter ones thus even though the body starts to bear eucalyptus smell but there is not much things left to be thought of. Materially, after the children finish their

*In the old age, the wealth to be taken
home later are only devotion and homage.
This is what the beautiful aging is*

education and able to support themselves, there are still some savings left. Spiritually, because the mind has been lightened from desires, life starts to converse with the vibrations of prayer.

This might be what Westerners call as life begins at forty. The word “begins” means starts to leave materiality and enter spirituality. Initiate to leave the earthly life which is burdened with gravitation of wants and greediness, into the light journey of the soul. As light as the incense floating to the sky. Borrowing a Moslem friend’s opinion: “There is a sentiment in performing shalat”. Or as inherited by St. Therese: “Nothing left but the thirst to love”.

Perhaps that is why Balinese elders refer to religious activity with the word *mebakti*. In the old age, the wealth to be taken home later are only devotion and homage. This is the elegant aging. But as how an aircraft requires a certain time to depart, so does the life that is preparing to leave the gravitation of desires. Do it slowly and naturally.

Happiness does not add and sadness does not subtract.

Osama, Obama, Olala

Perhaps it is an old habit of humanity to create stigma. Things match the criteria will be classified as “good” while the others are “bad”. Wars, fights, and quarrels, are all started from here; the so called “good” become allies whereas the “bad” become foes.

Meanwhile, things are different when perceived from the other party’s point of view. For examples, the terrorists and Osama bin Laden also think that they are good. Some even claim themselves as God’s crusaders.

Perhaps, the so called good people (Barrack Obama, for example, since he was granted Nobel Prize for peace) secretly doubt their own capacity of benevolence. As the evidence, Obama needed such a long time deciding whether to send troops to Afghanistan or not. And in the end, we all know that thousands of soldiers with countless weapons were unleashed.

Pay attention to the daily topics of Indonesian people’s talk in the recent years. News, manipulation, discourse, propaganda, investigation result, and sales manipulation are all mixed up. Those who are in the opposite party will say that mafia is behind this, while those who are benefited will say that everything is just fine. This not only happens in developing countries but even

*In life filled with the practice
of profound mindfulness, all places
become shrines. All sounds (including
praise and condemn) are sacred
mantras. All creations become divine beings*

in the more advanced countries such as England (as written by Norman Fairclough in *Discourse and Social Change*).

That is the world and its dynamics. While in geography the formula is that the shape of the area determines the map, in human life (without being realized) operates the reversed in which the map (point of view) determines the area (understanding). Therefore, for certain people Obama is the terrorist and the hypocrite.

Life as a Song

Knowing the danger of being confused by the mind, the disciples of clarity choose to dive into the present moment and listen to life as a song (Olala). The song of life is similar to the sky, sometimes it is bright (clean and clear), sometimes dimmed by dark clouds (sadness) or covered by the white ones (happiness). Nevertheless, dark clouds do not turn the sky black as well as the white ones do not make the sky white. Whatever happens, the sky is still blue. In meditation, this is called enlightenment. The first characteristic is that the mind has been awakened from the long slumber (the awakened mind). For too long, the mind has been asleep in the midst of confusion, as if the turmoil is life itself. The second is the rise of devotional desire as well as the infinite compassion toward all beings. Those who have attained this stage understand that happiness does not add and sadness does not subtract. Nevertheless, for the compassion toward all beings, the sacred song of life still must be chanted.

*Life is actually a sacred litany. However,
as years go by there are fewer and
fewer people singing this tune*

Jalalludin Rumi has an exquisite poem that says “Life is like an inn. The guests come and go each day, but no matter who the guest is, never forget to smile”. Thich Nhat Hanh defines such state of mind as “present moment wonderful moment”. Whereas most people only happy as masters, Saint Francis of Assisi found peace as a servant. In common language, people like this are “doing sacrifice”. However, the practitioners themselves feel very peaceful keeping the balance of the nature. Sometimes it is referred to as becoming one with the nature’s song. In the midst of countless people who only want triumph, some must take the lost. In the age upholding luxury, some must wear the garment of modesty. When life flares like the ocean of noise, someone must rest in peacefulness.

The Sacred Litany

There is only one essence of this path, that is see, perform, and end life with beautifulness. This is life as the sacred litany. In the language of the Hindus, this is called *Satchittananda*. Whoever frequently absorbed and united in the present moment, he or she shall see beautifulness everywhere.

Therefore, Javanese elders (then followed by Balinese elders) like to plant sawo kecik in their yard. In Balinese language, it is translated into *sarwa becik* (all are good). The wish is that everyone in the house might see that all things are good.

Therefore, those who treat life as a sacred song fill their life with the practice of mindfulness and beauty. Waking up, for example,

they begin their day by whispering: “Life is an option together with its consequences. Choosing anger will cause suffering while filling life with compassion will bring happiness”.

Another example, when opening the door, these people will contemplate: “Inside the mind there are too many birds singing noisily. God is confronted to Satan, good people to the bad. By opening this door, may those birds fly free to the sky, leaving the silent mind that touches the heart”.

Upon a misfortune, they will invoke the inner master: “Thank you master for your continuous guidance. In happiness you motivate while in sadness you teach on humbleness”.

In life filled with the practice of profound mindfulness, all places become shrines. All sounds (including praise and condemn) are sacred mantras. All creations become divine beings. Therefore, people in ancient India join their palms in front of their chest while saying *Namaste* upon meeting anyone. The simple meaning is: “I bow respectfully to the divinity in you”.

Life is actually a sacred litany. However, as years go by there are fewer and fewer people singing this song. And in the middle of the ocean of tears (natural disasters, terrorist bombs, suicides, crimes, corruptions, etc.) it will be greatly rejuvenating if some corners of life may tune the chant.

*Give, give, and keep on giving. Then see
your life become clement and tender.*

Prosperous with Sense, Abundant with Meaning

“Hoe, hoe, hoe deeply...”

“A compound of physical and mental poverty”, was a master’s message to a disciple at the end of meditation. Hospital that supposed to be a healing place is not only expensive; it even sends its patients to prison.

Household that used to be a shelter of human being’s development now turns into a dreary arena of fights. School that in the past was cherishing now has to be guarded by police officers during examination and some worrying arrestments are taking place. And there are still many other examples. These facts raise a question to the new generation; where civilization is going to take shelter?

The Lovely School

Recently, home schooling becomes trend in many places. A lot of children are afraid going to conventional school because of many reasons such as bullying, stern teachers, homework that is piling up, and never ending examinations.

*Only the act of giving that might
enable a person to "hoe his
or her life" deeply*

A fellow, a cabinet minister whose child takes home schooling, thinks hard on how to make school interesting for his kid. This inspires that perhaps now is the time to contemplate the charming sides of school. And among the available options, an alternative is to provide practice on giving.

In a driver training for a reputable taxi company, there was an interesting giving practice. In the first day, the participants were asked to bring food because they would not be given any meal. When lunch time came, they were asked to swap their dish with the class next door.

On the following day, a lot of participants prepared very simple menu; some even brought nothing but plain rice. And it was turned out later that this time they had to eat their own food.

The experience above illustrates how nowadays people are so extravagant for their own stomach. In fact, some even get stroke just because giving too many to their own appetite. However, so little do they give to other people's need. And suddenly the taxi drivers were startled realizing how selfish life is, and it is this egocentrism that brings sufferings into life.

Masters with inner abundance are never tired guiding their disciples to "Give, give, and keep on giving. And see your life become clement and tender afterward".

This can be done through simple things such as sweeping the floor, helping children with their homework or accompanying

*For those who are accustomed to
the act of giving (letting go), there
will be no more attachment that
makes death frightening*

them in a football game, arranging dishes in the absence of housekeeper, helping fellow staff when he or she has too many works, giving way to those who are in hurry, and many others.

At school, teachers can take example of the taxi drivers training mentioned earlier, taking students to orphanage or treatment center for the handicapped persons, visiting nursing home, or playing football with other children in the surrounding. The essence is to make them realize that giving is cherishing.

In the language of people who are fond of giving, when we give something actually we do not only alleviating others' burden but also awakening virtues within ourselves. And when those virtues emerge, happiness will naturally follow.

Three Stages of Giving

Some people divide the act of giving into three stages of eminencies. First, all beings are alike; desiring happiness and despising sadness, thus one should never do harm. Second, other beings are more important. Foods, water, air, jobs, and any other life-sustaining matters are provided by other beings. Animals are even killed so humans can consume their meat. Therefore, love other beings. Planting trees, saving lives, limiting the consumption of meat, or giving donation for the education of needy children.

Third, because other beings are more important, learn to give them happiness and take their suffering. Pay attention to the

prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi: “My Love, allow me to be a servant of peacefulness. Wherever there is anger, may I be present with compassion. Wherever there is hatred, may this mind come with forgiveness”. Sufi mystic Kabir wrote: “I glimpsed it for fifteen seconds and it made me a servant of life”. The Light is visible only for several seconds but it turns a worshipper into an attendance.

HH Dalai Lama often touches the heart of his audience when uttering the beautiful message: “If you want to be happy, love others. If you want other people to be happy, love them”.

This is similar to the Indonesian children’s song about planting corn quoted in the opening of this chapter. Because it is only by hoeing deeply that the roots might support the life of the branches, leaves, flowers, and the fruits. Human’s life is the same. It is only the act of giving that enables a person to “hoe his or her life” deeply. And as the result, there will be a beautiful flower of life that blooms: “prosperous with sense, abundant with meaning”. In this stage, something whispers: “Death can be beautiful too!” Firstly, for those who are accustomed in the act of giving (letting go), there will be no more attachment that makes death frightening. Secondly, through death we are bringing the act of giving into perfection. What is the point of being penny-pinching when one day we have to let go even our own body?

In death, the earth element of the body unites with the earth, and then participates in sustaining the life of beings by

producing paddy, vegetable, and fruit. The water element unites with water to satisfy the thirst of others. The fire element unites with fire so creations can produce their food. The air element unites with the air for the breathing of creatures. The soul element (some refer to this as consciousness) unites with all souls (consciousnesses) thus others can also be gentle. This is the beautiful death by which a soul is not perished but performs the act of giving.

The compassion that embraces all as well as embraced by all is the “spiritual parent” of all beings.

Peacefulness and Interconnectedness

Based on the latest tendencies, a prominent daily paper concludes that our future is miserable and horrible, especially on reviewing the rampant kidnapping of babies, mutilations, robberies, even murdering of children by their own mothers. Added up with the news of the addition of American soldiers in Afghanistan and the more furious Al Qaeda, things seem even worse.

It turns out that the advancement of science and technology plus the swift development of spirituality are not successful enough to significantly withdraw human tendency to hurt each other. Religious institution that used to play a major role is now facing the same doom. Such conditions deliver a question for us all; who will shelter the civilization with tranquility in the future?

Back to the Core

Not many people are capable to produce works as serene as Karen Armstrong and Deepak Chopra. Armstrong can speak about the Prophet Mohammed with the same beauty as her

*Wickedness and war are caused
by the failure of humanity in recognizing
the interconnected natures of life*

telling of the Buddha. Chopra was able to write Buddha's enlightenment with the same elegance as his writing on Jesus.

Though spending a lot of time studying Ayurveda healing, Chopra was very impressive when writing *The Third Jesus*. In Chopra's classification, the first Jesus was a saint borne two thousand years ago, the second is Jesus as the Son of God. The third is the cosmic Jesus, the spiritual counselor whose teaching encompasses all humanity. The core is, only compassion that embraces everything as well as embraced by everything.

This is very similar to a wonderful message of a Guru: We can live without religion, but we cannot live without compassion. Religious institution might experience downfall but people can still eat, have medication, and pray. But pay attention to human's primary daily need that cannot be postponed as eating.

The availability of food depends on the sacrifice of farmers (because prosperous farmers are very rare to find). The animals are even more miserable because they must perish so human can consume their meat. In other words, the compassion that embraces all as well as embraced by all is the "spiritual parent" of all beings.

Thus it can be easily understood when the compassion appears in the teaching of every religion. In Islam, it is presented as the first of the 99 names of Allah. In Christianity, it is explicitly mentioned that God is loving-kindness. In building the sublime

*The truth is, in the peace of our
neighbor lies our peacefulness,
and in our peacefulness lies our neighbor's*

states (*Brahma Vihara*), the followers of Buddhism put *metta-karuna* (compassion) in the first place. The essence of Hinduism is *tattvamasi* (all want happiness, no one wish for sadness, therefore share a lot of compassion and do no harm).

Like a rotating wheel, civilization is indeed spinning with war and wickedness. However, there is no movement at all at the center point; only exquisite silent. This inspires that if we don't want the future to be miserable and horrible, perhaps this is the time to return to the centre of the circle (the core of the teaching) that is compassion.

Among the spiritual practitioners, since a long time there has been a profound longing on the presence of the religion of love. Not only because the boredom upon wickedness and greediness, but also because both of them drive people away from peacefulness.

Contemplating such materials, perhaps this is the right time for humanity to build an interconnectedness bridge thus life does not move toward destruction.

Take a close look to the self. No one can be peaceful on him or her own. Pay attention to the air which is so vital in human's life; it is the result of the work of the trees and other components of the nature. Parents, as other examples, are never peaceful when their child is ill. Business persons cannot gain benefit without their workers, government will be in danger when they are not in harmonious relationship with the people.

The second gate of interconnectedness is redefining the role of religion. After the fall of the World Trade Center in 2001, in the West there are numerous works taking standpoint in opposition with religion. Just for examples, one is entitled God is not great: how religion poisoned everything. Other work bears the title of How religion poisoned people. The main point is that the charisma of religion is declining drastically.

There are certainly many things hidden behind all of these, but the obtrusive one is the weak connection between religious practice and peacefulness. Therefore, there are numerous spiritual disciples seriously shift the course of the quest from ritualistic piety into the ascetic one. From ceremonial into self-discovery which is getting deeper and deeper. In this kind of seeking, religions no longer appear as dangerous boxes that separate people. On the contrary, they come as the vehicles into enlightenment.

Therefore, the homework for all religions is how they can contribute to peacefulness and enlightenment? Without this contribution, religion, whatever it is, is going to be abandoned. And people like Armstrong and Chopra teach that only love that can connect, make peace, and enlighten.

Back to the previous story about the horrible future, wickedness and war happen because humanity fails to see the interconnected natures of life. Fritjof Chapra wrote that the death of butterflies in Singapore affects the climate in America.

Social anthropologist Gregory Bateson mentions the network of interconnectedness between us. Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that we are branches of the same tree and many stars of the one sky. Daniel Goleman refers to this as *Ecological Intelligence*.

And through the core of the teachings (compassion), humanity is re-interweaving the interconnectedness. If even a super power country as mighty as the United States cannot make peace by attacking other party, moreover the powerless beings. The truth is, in the peace of our neighbor lies our peacefulness, and in our peacefulness resides our neighbor's.

The meaning of life is revealed only when we start learning to stop.

The True Fortune

Around 1920's, Dutch researcher came to Bali and discovered that in the life of the local people there is no art as a means of commercial performance. All activities in life (farming, carving, dancing, etc.) are carried out as sequences of offering. Therefore, one among the meanings of Bali is "offering".

Nothing is flawless below heaven, and Bali experienced the trial of the terrorist bombs. The sorrow was so painful at that time, yet moments later Bali revived and even repeatedly awarded as the best tourist destination of the world by international media.

Speaking frankly, there is a spirit dwells behind the charisma of Bali which often regarded as the last paradise by international society, and it grows as a result of the fusion between religion and art for thousands of years. The synthesis is then offered as a sequence of service thus becomes the source of Indonesian inspiration that still has a lot of rooms for charity, especially when people's feeling is offended by the corruption scandals. When Bali can be enchanting with its service that is the union of religion and art, why can't Indonesia while in both religion and art this country is abundance with values that uphold service?

*Fortune does not exist only in idealistic goals but in each step of service as well.
Development does not merely need the
magnificence of the result,
but also long for the
gentleness of the process*

Fortune in Service

In the past, only the merchants were keen on making profit. Nowadays, houses, work place, and even gardens are arranged in such manner so fortune may come from all directions. And what else the measurement of fortune if not wealth? However, this certainly needs to be appreciated as well.

Western civilization has been much more advanced than us in the matter of wealth. However, advancement a la Western claims an expensive toll. In this age we can witness a lot of mental hospitals are so crowded with patients that some of them (though have not been completely recovered yet) have to be sent away to give room for new patients with more severe illness. Penitentiaries also do not have enough room thus a number of remissions were given simply because of the insufficiency of the cells. The drastically increasing number of divorce, civilization's failure against war and terrorism.

An Eastern master once stayed overnight in the house of a very rich American. The house itself was magnificently luxurious, but in the bathroom there were sleeping pills in surprising number. It turns out that the abundance of wealth does not always make someone sleep easier.

The most recent example in this country is the record of some parties' intention to dismiss the Anti Corruption Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi). It is obvious how excessive lust toward wealth can even destroy the entire order law of a nation.

*This is the true fortune: being enlightened,
then performing the task of service unnoticed*

In general no one forbids the pursuit of wealth, but, taking into account the severe compensation of such desire, it is worth to reconsider the definition of fortune.

Eastern elders since long time ago have known the wisdom of a cat chasing its own tail. The more it hunts, the more the tail runs. And when the cat stops, the tail stops as well. In Franz Kafka's words: the meaning of life is that it stops. The meaning of life is revealed only when human starts learning to stop. The unique thing is, the halt does not cause the lost of meaning but, on the contrary, leads to the finding. This explains why a meditation instructor suggests that life is similar to water in a glass. However steady the hand is, the water will move still. Therefore, just simply put the glass down!

The advice certainly does not mean that all must leave the town and reside in the forest, or that everybody has to leave their daily life to meditate. The meaning is to put down the excessive desire that life must always be suitable to the demand of idealism, and then to learn that, in reality, fortune does not exist only in idealistic goals but in each step of service as well. Development does not merely need the magnificence of the result, but also long for the gentleness of the process.

Whoever given spiritual blessing to see Nusantara profoundly, moreover in the era when this country is nearly collapsed by corruption scandals, will be touched upon knowing that Mohammad Hatta (one of the proclaimers of Indonesian independence) walked his life in the path of service. One Friday,

his wife said that the saving was finally enough to purchase a sewing machine and, because of her business, she would go to buy the machine on the following Monday. Mr. Hatta knew that the money would not be sufficient because he was going to announce the policy of redenomination on that particular Monday. However, regarding public interest as more important than the personal, he did not say a word. Similar to Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa, those who fill their life with service will not be dimmed but brightened instead.

Reflecting from this, a master once wrote: The joy of life ultimately comes from effortlessly giving our selves to others, like a white bird in the snow. In the life of the wise, happiness comes from the sincerity of continuous giving. Exactly like a white bird in the snow, providing help but yet unseen. In this perspective, it can be understood when a meditation disciple in the West, after realizing the enlightenment, did not put on hermetic robe but became a taxi driver instead. This is the true fortune: being enlightened, then performing the task of service without being seen.

Perhaps that is why in the developed countries bureaucracy workers are not termed as government officers but civil servants. Giving service, that is the one and only reason why bureaucracy and professions are formed, as well as it is also the one and only duty of the enlightened beings. And the task of giving service becomes touching when someone is able to read the sacred message behind the story of a white bird in the snow. If there are a lot of leaders, healers, law practitioners in this

country whose hearts are touched by the story, and minds are enlightened by Bali island's spirit of service, innumerable poverties might be dispelled from Nusantara. There are countless suicides, depressions, crimes, divorces, and other social diseases that might be avoided. This might as well stop the spreading of the negative virus that makes the nature is continuously tempting with disasters. And the most important of all, it is only by giving service to honesty that people's disappointment might be healed.

Death is not a horrible separation but a movement to re-embrace the great ocean.

Frangipani

In Bali, frangipani is the favorite flower for offering. Most Balinese feel beauty, tranquility, and tenderness in their heart when seeing and holding it. However, in Java frangipani is commonly planted in cemetery thus it has creepy and scary impression. It is only recently when a lot of tourists admire Bali, many houses and hotels in Jakarta also plant the flower.

The lesson is simple; signification is indeed relative and subjective. Frangipani is a symbol of holiness on one side whereas it is a presentation of fear on the other. Life is also similar. Whoever experience studying in business school in 1980s and 1990 must have heard the name of Lee Iacocca. At that time he was frequently mentioned as an American hero by his saving the automobile giant Chrysler from bankruptcy.

Before regarded a hero, he was only an outcasted official at Ford. The story was not very clear (it is always difficult differentiating black and white in politics), but it was said that one time Iacocca only got vice president chair plus an office in the warehouse. Naturally, he was upset.

In the midst of this temptation, there was an offer to lead Chrysler. With the desire to immediately leave the hot spot Iacocca took the chance and the new job turned out to be even

*Be as hard as a rock in training
your self, but be as gentle as
water in serving others.*

hotter, thus life wheeled from one cliff into another. Striking labor, billing banker, tax officer, stakeholders, distributors, complaining customers; all seemed to be never ending.

Yet perseverance often becomes a vehicle leading someone out from the dark tunnel of failure. At one time, Lee Iacocca's determination resulted. Chrysler was not merely stepped out of the crisis but transformed from a loser into a winner thus Iacocca as the leader also turned from a victim into a hero. This gives inspirational teaching that calamity in one period of time might become source of blessing in the next.

Like the frangipani, life keeps on turning. Today's smelly trash will become fragrant and beautiful frangipani a few days ahead. Fragrant flower that represents beauty in this day will turn into repulsive trash a few days ahead. The suffering of most people is originated from desiring the flower but refusing the trash, which is similar to desiring fire but rejecting the heat, wanting water but refusing the wetness.

Therefore, the enlightened masters strictly train themselves to be united with all streams of life. Like the ocean, life is full of waves. Some of them are high (praised), some others are low (condemned). Yet all waves will humbly bow upon kissing the lips of the shore. The meaning is, life might have its ups and downs but when death finally calls do not forget to bow in humbleness. Death is not a horrible separation but a movement to re-embrace the vast ocean.

*In Bali frangipani is used for offering
while in Java it is planted in cemetery.
However, in both places it keeps on servicing
life by spreading beauty and fragrance*

Provided by this contemplation, a teacher gives the message to “Be as hard as a rock in training your self, but be as gentle as water in serving others”. In accordance, another teacher says “Religion was not meant to attack other people but to attack our own weakness”.

Sometimes people ask: after attaining enlightenment, is life always passive? The natural character of enlightenment is far from passivity. It is similar to the goat that naturally rejects eating meat and the wolf that naturally refuses consuming grass.

The enlightened masters are also similar. Some of them indeed dwell in isolated caves, but they do so not for their own sake but in order to keep the balance of the nature. Most of the enlightened masters mingle in society. They wear various kinds of outfit, but their inner spirit is the same: life is a vehicle of service!

It is exactly the same with frangipani. In Bali it is used for offering while in Java it is planted in cemetery. However, in both places frangipani keeps on servicing life by spreading beauty and fragrance. So do the enlightened beings; praise does not produce arrogance and condemn does not become the source of anger.

Like snow flakes that fall into a lake, negative energies are not eliminated but embraced. As the result, the flakes gradually vanish.

Restoring the Inner Borobudur

Cosmic tension is everywhere. Thailand that used to be the land of smiles is now turned into the land of fights. Nusantara which is full of nature blessings keep a lot of sadness. In many law cases, intelligence was used to legalize dirtiness. In the sad story about education, school fee is not getting more affordable for the common people. In the account of sick poor people, the expensiveness of medication fee does not only prevent them to get medical treatment, some of them even commit suicide to escape the unbearable pain. Perhaps this is why Lash & Urry (1987) entitled their work *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Capitalism indeed starts to loose its ability in organizing society.

This kind of cosmic tension certainly does not belong only to this age. An elder in Java said that one day Mr. Soeharto (ex Indonesian president) came and asked for counsel. The elder unwrapped three packets of legacies with hundreds of years of age. All of the three had the same message: "Restore Borobudur".

Whether caused by this message or other things, Mr. Soeharto had restored Borobudur, and perhaps it is wise for us who live in

*Sacred scriptures have the same manner
with a bride undressing before her husband.
And the profound practice of realizing
and cherishing makes someone engaged
to a holy manuscript*

this era full of cosmic tension to consider restoring the Borobudur within ourselves.

The Nobility of Patience

Borobudur is actually an ancient opened book, free to be interpreted by humanity. The note then is, when someone is interpreting a sacred scripture, he or she is not merely reconstructing the meaning of the scripture but reflecting the level of his or her study.

For a lot of people, the ground part of Borobudur tells disgusting tale of lust. It can be understood since in the particular part we can see reliefs showing alcohol consumption and sexual intercourse. From another standpoint, starting right from its base Borobudur is describing the path of enlightenment. Some holy books indeed loathe desires, but without sexual desire of our parents, for example, it is impossible for us to have the opportunity to dive into the ocean of enlightenment. Borobudur teaches not to purge desire but to use it as a step to study further.

Therefore, in meditation it is taught to practice mindfulness 24 hours a day, as well as during the sleep through the practice of dream yoga. Numerous meditation instructors gently say that: “whatever image appears during meditation, whatever happens in daily life, never forget to always realize and care”. Happiness, sadness, life, and death are all realized and cherished.

*Those who have strengthened their two wings
will be like the garuda offspring on their death;
immediately soar into the realm of enlightenment*

The rationale is, if anger and malice are realized and cherished, then they are going to blaze even more. Nevertheless, many yogis with high intensity of meditation found the opposite outcome. The synthesis of realizing and caring makes the negative energy vanishes where they are. Like snow flakes that fall into a lake, the negative energy is not eliminated but embraced. As the result, the flakes gradually vanish.

Borrowing the Sufi's understanding, sacred books have the same manner with a bride who is undressing before her husband. And the profound practice of realizing and cherishing makes someone becomes a fiancé of a sacred scripture. Therefore, only a small number of visitors are interested in reading the reliefs, and even fewer are those who enlightened, especially because only a few human beings are ready to become consorts of sacred scriptures.

For students practicing profound mindfulness, the reliefs of Borobudur are sharp knives that smoothen and pierce unpolished bamboo (unenlightened mind) into a flute which is smooth to touch, beautiful to see, and gentle to hear (enlightened mind).

One among the thrilling stories in the middle part of Borobudur is the tale of an ascetic who sits collectedly in the palace's yard and then peeped by the concubines. The king, enflamed by jealousy, asked: "What do you teach hermit?" Calmly, gently, tenderly, the reclusive answered: "Patience, your highness". The anger of the king was swelling, he yelled: "What is patience?"

With the same calmness, gentleness, and tenderness, the ascetic replied: “Patience is not reacting when being harmed, your highness”.

The king was enraged. He summoned his headsman to lash the ascetic. After the hermit’s body was bleeding, the king again yelled asking the meaning of patience. As the ascetic delivered the same answer with the same manner, the king was even more enraged thus he took sword and cut the ascetic’s arms and legs. In this condition, when the king again asked the meaning of patience, the ascetic yet still gave the same answer in exactly the same manner. This ascetic was, after several rebirths following the event, born as Prince Siddharta.

For we who live in the era of democracy, patience includes conscientiousness to keep on its implementation. Winston Churchill was right, democracy is not the best but until now we have not found the better one yet. Therefore, even though democracy is fussy and painful – someone even liken a leader with a buffalo – but there is no other option but to keep it going patiently. Every pain of today’s leader is a seed of change that will result in the future.

The Gentleness of Serenity

There is no relief in the upper part of Borobudur. There are only circles of *Mandala* (perfection) containing sitting Buddha statues with the teaching *mudra* (hand gesture). Borobudur is crowned by the biggest *stupa* which is without any opening and empty

inside, symbolizing that the final quest in restoring the inner Borobudur is the perfect silence.

The meaning of silence is different from one calling to the other. For an ascetic, silence means dedicating all his or her life for other people. For a leader, it means struggle to alleviate sufferings. For common people, it means filling life with service. In HH Dalai Lama's words: "If one has to choose between religion and compassion, he or she should go for compassion". It is by this caring spirit that ignorance and poverty might be overcome in the future.

Therefore, some people simplify the essence of Borobudur teaching into the analogy of a bird's wings. The left wing is silence while the other one is compassion. Silence is perfect only when filled with compassion while compassion is perfect only when performed in silence (selflessness). Those who have strengthened their two wings will be like the *garuda* offspring on their death; immediately soar into the realm of enlightenment.

An indication of a person who has arrived at home is resting in his or her own nature.

The Sun of Bali

Chaos is globalizing. Western countries that used to be international role models of orderliness, politeness, and civilization, are now drenched in blood. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was thrown with a figure causing bleeding wound on his face. On Wednesday, February 2nd 2010, Turkish Prime Minister suffered the same incident with Bush; thrown with shoes.

Political situation in Indonesia is miserable as well. While in Majapahit period people believed their king to be a reincarnation of god, these days some people have the heart equaling their leader to a buffalo.

Equaling human body to the universe, the cosmic order is in harmony when the hat is covering the head and the shoes are protecting the foot. Chaos happens when the footwear is thrown to the head and the leader (head) is treated badly. The nature's response of bedlam (on Saturday February 2nd 2010 there was even a terrible earthquake with the scale of 8.8 Richter scale in Chile, followed by tsunami along Pacific area), is certainly not a coincidence because nature is merely reflecting human's behavior.

The inner sun of silence might rise when someone fills his or her mind with positive thinking and take the steps illuminated by the light.

As the result, the person will be healed (enlightened). The nature of an enlightened being is that he or she always takes the middle path

Resting in Nature

If able, a lot of beings will avoid the chaos. Yet temptation is a nature of life since the ancient time. In Rama's era the tempter was Rahwana, in the Buddha it was Devadatta, in Christ it was Yudas, while in the Prophet Muhammad's age it was the Quraish tribe. This inspires that when there were tempters even in the days of the prophets and holy scriptures, moreover in this age of darkness.

Therefore, running away from the disorder is like a monkey running away from its own tail; simply useless. This is the one causing the saints to find their rest in the nature.

Similar to the trees that grow approaching the sunray, grass that is healthy in its green, and fishes those are happy in the water, human beings resting in their own nature are actually on their way to the true home.

The Sun of Stillness

Different places have different stories. Balinese elders protect their next generation by providing them with spiritual legacies. In Pura Kehen Bangli, the elders placed an old monument where one can read an invitation to go home. The meaning of homecoming itself is various indeed. However, an indication of a person who has arrived at home is that he or she is taking a rest in his or her own nature.

Like the trees, enlightened beings are motionless outside but in the stillness they process carbon dioxide into the essentially important positive vibration

Every child grows in the old villages of Bali and asks about religiosity to the elders will usually replied by the phrase: “*nak mula keto*” (“that’s the way it is”), as if granting a secret key to the way home.

For a seeker longing for an answer, debate, and argument, such reply is disappointing. However, the phrase (“*nak mula keto*”) is amazing for advanced yogis. After long journey inward, it turns out that life is similar to the water in the universe. Heavy rains do not make it swell and summers do not make it less.

Those with activated spiritual sight will see that sadness does not subtract and happiness does not add. All are perfect as they are. Therefore in Tantra enlightened beings discover three forms of *samadhi* (concentration): *samadhi of suchness*, *samadhi of illumination*, and *samadhi of seed syllable*.

The first concentration is found when the practitioner sees things perfect as they are. The second is signed by the appearance of light (symbolically in the luminous life and literally in seeing light). The third concentration happens when the practitioner has seen, heard, and placed sacred syllable in his or her heart.

Take notice to a tea spoon in a cup. Stir it a little and it will make sound. On the contrary, wield a hammer in a large room. There won’t be any crash and sound. This teaches that fights and disorders happen because of the shrinking of the human’s mind. When all are perceived as they are, the mind becomes as vast as

the universe, then there is no sound left. There is only the exquisite perfect silence that remains.

The world might keep on turning with its cosmic chaos, yet every *Nyepi* celebration a sun of silence sets in Bali.

Take a close look to Bali Island. In the head (north) where people can witness the rising and the downing of the sun, Balinese elders named the village Kubutambahan. *Kubu* means “house”, *tambah* means “positive” thus Kubutambahan means the house of the positive-minded people. In the foot of Bali (south) where the sun intimately meets the summit of Agung mountain, the name of the village is Sanur. *Sa* means “one”, *nur* is “light” therefore Sanur means “The Light”. The place where millions of people from many parts of the world experienced healing is named Ubud (*ubad*, means “medicine”), which is located at the center.

Combined into one reading, the inner sun of silence might rise if people fill their mind with positive thinking and take their steps illuminated by the light. As the result, they will be healed (enlightened). The nature of an enlightened being is that he or she always takes the middle path. The summit of the seeking in this path is tranquility where all dualities (right – wrong, holy – unholy, good – bad) are dissolved by stillness into an enchanting beauty. Therefore, there are a lot of loveliness remain in Bali.

Observing the center point of Pura Besakih (between *Kiwa – Tengen*), one will see that the elders provided the sign of *Parama*

***Shunya* (the supreme silence). At the particular point, the elders do not place anything because there is nothing left to be explained.**

In the eyes of common people, this kind of achievement is seen negatively (doing nothing), yet it is wonderful in the sight of the enlightened masters. Like the trees, enlightened beings are motionless outside but in the stillness they process carbon dioxide (cosmic disorder) into the oxygen (positive vibration) vitally needed by other beings.

Rear Gate

Enlightenment in Every Step

Prologue

Numerous people assume that enlightenment is something far away and unattainable. However, this simple book perceives that enlightenment exists in every life and all factors required for the attainment are available within our selves. In other words, enlightenment is very near. As believed by many masters (Thich Nhat Hanh, Lama Yeshe, etc.), the innermost part of every being is already enlightened, and it is just temporarily concealed by many obstructions those are very likely to be removed by the act of mingling daily life with meditation, in particular by the practice of profound mindfulness.

In the end there are two results of this practice: the awakened mind and the infinite compassion, those are as well the qualities of an enlightened being. In the first, the mind has been awakened from the long slumber in which dualities (right – wrong, good – bad, holy – unholy, success – failure) are viewed as separated things. These dualities then seize the mind thus life is trapped in turmoil. Those with deep practice of mindfulness understand that up – down, holy – unholy, and other dualities are the same with fire and heat, ocean and wave. How can we separate water with wetness, fire with heat, and ocean with wave? The mind is awakened when it is able to accept the inseparability of the ocean and the wave.

After being awakened by the light of mindfulness, the second nature of the profound mindfulness is that there will be an

altruistic desire to always love all beings without any discrimination.

Speaking frankly, this idea is inspired by Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh's work entitled *Present Moment Wonderful Moment*. Since the early time, it has been a nature of every work to inspire each other and Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh himself acknowledges that he is also inspired by the teaching of mindfulness practice from the earlier masters.

With thoughtful study we will notice that Anthony de Mello, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jalalludin Rumi were practicing mindfulness as well. There are two likenesses among the advanced practitioners of mindfulness: radiant life and loving-kindness.

Waking Up

Life is actually an option intact with its consequences. Choosing ignorance and anger will result in suffering, while fulfilling life with affection will bring happiness. Therefore, may this day proceed with love as the choice.

The setting sun, singing birds, sprinkling water, greening grass, rejuvenating trees, all are emanations of the nature's love.

By this inspiration, may every step in this day be prompted only by the energy of loving-kindness.

Wearing Sandals

For most people, sandals are merely footwear. However, in the practice of profound mindfulness, they are bells reminding to constantly walk with undivided realization and unyielding patience. Mindfulness is an illuminating light. Thousands of years of darkness, ignorance, greed, malevolence and such kinds, might be immediately dispelled as the light of mindfulness shines. Nevertheless, because of the tremendous difficulty in igniting the light of mindfulness, constant persistence (patience) is required to initiate the ray.

Opening the Door

This mind contains too many chirping “birds”. Righteousness is opposed to wickedness, good is contradicted to bad, up is countered to down; such is the noisiness of this mind.

Opening the door is like uncaging the birds. May the noisy “birds” fly to the sky, leaving a tranquil mind that touches the heart.

Walking Meditation

Life is very similar to walking; all are sequences of a cycle that come and go. The stepping of the right feet begins on the expiration of the left feet's move, and the stepping of the left feet started by the end of the right.

Happiness – sadness, success – failure, life –death, are following the same rule; they take place alternately.

Dualities are like the clouds in the sky: they appear – vanish, emerge – evaporate. Still, the black cloud does not make the sky black as well as the white one does not turn the sky white. Whatever happens, the sky remains as blue as ever. Those who are untouched and unaffected by the rise and fall of dualities, are enlightened.

Brushing Teeth

Tooth brush, tooth paste, and water are indeed capable of sanitizing the mouth from physical dirt. However, the light of mindfulness turns the brushing of one's teeth into a mind-purifying activity thus his or her lips might utter the "fragrant" words. Our mouth likes sweet things thus the words come out of it should only be the sweet ones as well.

Cleaning Glasses

Heaven – hell, *nirvana* – *samsara*, are started from the perspective. When it is full of friendship and compassion all places become heaven and *nirvana*, while when it is full of hostility and fights they are hell and *samsara*.

Therefore, may this cleaning of the glasses become the purifying of the perception. In the pure and clear perspective, it is obvious that the left eye is actually the eye of wisdom and the right is the eye of service.

Wisdom without service is like an armless man trying to climb a tree whereas service unguided by wisdom is similar to a man running blindfolded.

Taking a Bath

Water, you are the symbol of gentleness. It is by your tenderness that you can pass all obstacles in your way, thus you may arrive to the ocean home.

Therefore, bathing does not only cleanse and rejuvenate the body, but also change all rigidity of the mind (which is the origin of suffering) into tenderness. After taking a bath, may this mind be as well coated by gentleness, thus we may return to the home of enlightenment.

Drying the Body with the Towel

This towel is tender and smooth. It is not only dries the body but also transfers the energy that enables the mind to become tender and smooth.

Borrowing Venerable Dalai Lama's message: *"If I have to choose between religion and compassion, I will choose compassion"*. Through its tenderness and smoothness, this towel is echoing the message.

Dressing

Suffering comes from the mind which is besieged by concepts (right –wrong, good – bad, holy – unholy, etc.). The concept of duality is the cause of fight, malignancy, divorce, and wars. In this moment, may this body be covered by dress as how it should be according to the code of courtesy.

Nevertheless, might the mind be naked as it is, for only by the naked mind that the sun of mindfulness might be risen.

Meditation

Meditation is adjusting the mind from its monkey nature (that jumps here and there) to the calm and fearless qualities of the lion.

A lot of people hate the monkey mind, while in truth the unenlightened mind is wavy by nature. This is as simple as the ocean and its waves. Because ocean is inseparable to the waves, the unenlightened mind is indivisible to the jumping as well.

However, the diligence of practice will gradually calm the wave, and this is more likely to be achieved if a practitioner rests in whatever happens in the present moment.

When the calm wave of the mind meets the sufficient accumulation of merit and experience frequently embraces the silence (the accumulation of wisdom), it might be the time for the lotus of enlightenment to bloom.

Eating

This food consists of so many sacrifices. Farmers keep on serving life though they are living in poverty. Animals are even more touching that they have to be killed so human may have meat on their diet.

Since the ingredients of life are kindness and sacrifice, may these foods be ingredients of kindness to be transmitted to other beings.

Holding Fruits

In this fruit there is truth (*Dharmakaya*). United in this fruit are elements of sun light, moon light, unlimited love of mother earth, hard work of human beings. All are tidily composed in a perfect network of life.

Physicist Fritjoff Capra calls it *the hidden connections*, social anthropologist Gregory Bateson refers to it as *the pattern that connects*, Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh states that we are merely different leaves of the same tree and different stars of the same sky.

By eating this fruit, may life tidily unite with the truth of *Dharmakaya* where all dualities are fused into one. In the end of the union, there is nothing but a smile in silence.

Drinking Water

Chemically, water is formed by hydrogen and oxygen. With a precise and methodical synthesis, the fire becomes water that is tender, subtle, and exquisite.

Life might be full of fires (insulted, assaulted), but by drinking this water may we be reminded to always transform the fires of life into the lovely gentleness of compassion.

Washing Dishes

For billions of births, this mind has been dirty like this plate. Whereas dishes are washed with water and soap, the mind is purified by practicing profound awareness.

When a plate is clean, the bacteria are gone. When mindfulness is embodied in daily life, all “germs” such as ignorance, greed, and malice are also disappeared.

Getting Rid of the Garbage

Clean – dirty, fragrant – smelly, pleasing – annoying, are exist only in our mind. In the nature, which is functioning as it is, it is apparent that today's flower will become tomorrow's trash whereas the trash today might become flower in the following day. Those who are complimented today can be scorned tomorrow, and today's condemnation might become substance for tomorrow's appraisal.

Flowing perfectly with the law of impermanence (without any refusal whatsoever) is enlightenment. In *shunyata* (perfect stillness) all are of one sense.

Driving Car

Life is indeed a long journey, and only a very few persons know exactly where the destination is. However, like this driving, may life be enlightened in every step.

Starting the car's engine is activating the light of mindfulness. Driving the car is leading life with mindfulness as the driver. Whatever seen and experienced along the way (pleasing or annoying), mindfulness reminds to keep the smile on our lips.

Intervals

Whenever there is a chance to stop for a while (traffic light, lifting tea cup, hearing the telephone ring, turning on the lamp, standing in line, etc.) silently say: *“Feel the freshness of the air when inhaling, be grateful to life that bestow abundance of happiness. Then take a look around and see how life is ornamented with perfection everywhere”*.

Absorb the healing energy from the mother earth. Seeds planted in earth are cultivated into flowers and fruits. And the flower of the mindfulness practice is the profound comprehension that all of us desire happiness and despise sadness. The fruit of the practice is life which contains nothing but compassion.

Getting Into Work Place

For some people, work is an annoying obligation, the opposite of recreation. However, after being illuminated by the light of mindfulness, work can be recreational as well.

The requirement is simple, that is finding happiness in giving service. We are indebted to so many beings (parents, teachers, trees, etc.), and only through service that we may gradually decrease the debt. Moreover, through service the sun of happiness might rise and shine upon our life.

Leadership

It will be wonderful if those who have authority start their day contemplating: *“Authority might turn a person noble as Mahatma Gandhi, or mad as Hitler. May the authority in these hands follow Gandhi’s path”*.

In the way of Mahatma Gandhi, leadership is condensed into a simple phrase: *“silent mind, serving body”*.

Trouble, Trial, Temptation

Upon misfortune and other annoying occasions, summon the inner teacher: *“Thank you for keep on guiding. In suffering you are dispelling the journey from obstacles”*.

Most people hate sadness, yet in more profound layers of comprehension sadness is full of message and guidance. Above all, suffering makes many debts in life are settled by themselves.

Going Home

All people are longing to go home. Happy, comfortable, and cheerful are the signs of those who are already at home. Through the practice of profound mindfulness, we are being guided to the home of enlightenment, where all guests in life (success – failure, praised – scorned, life – death) are welcomed and embraced warmly.

In the mindfulness that has arrived home, there is nothing left save the longing to keep on loving.

Turning on the Lamp

For too long life has been circling in the darkness of ignorance, greed, anger, and malice. And darkness is expelled only by the presence of light.

May this turning on the lamp be also the opportunity to activate the light of mindfulness within.

In the light of mindfulness, it is obvious that life is merely the wheel of *karma*. Those who resist *karma* (protesting, discontented) are prolonging their misery whereas those who flow perfectly with it are like the flexible and gentle water that in time shall arrive at the ocean of enlightenment.

Going to Sleep

Inner master, a number of things have happened this day. Please forgive the bad ones. Always teach me to see that life is like an ocean, that always has its waves. Some of the waves are high (wealth, fame) and the others are low (common life). However, every wave will humbly bow when they kiss the shoreline.

Life is also the same. However high or low it is, there will be time when it reach the shore named death. In the light of mindfulness, the existence of death is not to frighten life but to make life keeps on humble.

Just like the wave returning to the ocean from the coast, death is actually bringing souls back to the ocean of enlightenment where all things happen (good – bad, holy – unholy, right – wrong) are accepted and embraced without any greed to choose moreover to reject. In the embrace of the ocean of enlightenment, it is easier for these eyes to behold the dream land.

Like the *garuda* offspring that immediately fly after the breaking of the egg, the enlightened beings at the moment of death also instantly soar into the realm of enlightenment.

If there are good deed conducted this day, allow me to make it an offering for the master and all beings, together with a sincere prayer: “May you always illuminate the darkness of life with the

teaching, may all beings experience the supreme enlightenment”.

Epilogue

Because the mind is the origin of everything, those who persistently practice mindfulness by this method do not only find *mandala* (perfection) at the religious sites. Wherever they sit, stand, or walk, their surroundings turn into *mandala*. They are *mandala* themselves.

Words might be different, but it is important to always conclude the experience of life with the perspective of solid comprehension. It is easier to love when we are full of understanding.

Seeing, moreover prostrating before a master requires purity of heart and sufficient deposit of good karma.

Guru Yoga, Guru Puja⁴

Misery invades from all directions. Bali that used to be the world's last resort in finding peace, were twice stricken by the terrorist bombs. Mental hospitals are crowded with patients, the numbers of suicide and divorce are keep on increasing, while wars, terrors, and conflicts do not sign any relieve.

There are numerous possibilities behind all these, among them is that society is moving without guidance of a master. The state is similar to chicks without their hen; chirping frantically gripped by fear and uncertainty. In this kind of turmoil, perhaps the master has not been born yet, or maybe humanity has not yet posses the ability to recognize, meet, moreover worship and learn from the master.

The Requirement to Meet the Master

If only the great masters from the past like Rama, Shri Krishna, or Buddha went to Bali (as a spiritual region), the response of

⁴ *Those who suit the path of Guru Yoga, Guru Puja (often dream of meeting their master, deep respect toward their master, easy to shed tear before their master, receive master's guidance through dreams, moreover see the master as sacred a being like Shiva or Buddha), deserve reading HH Dalai Lama's work entitled The Union of Bliss and Emptiness: Teachings on the Practice of Guru Yoga (Snow Lion Publications 2009).*

*If the disciple can already recognize
the master as a sacred being (Shiva,
Buddha, etc.) then the destination
is already near*

society will depend on their readiness to meet the master. Those who have been entirely freed from mental defilements (anger, greed, malice) and have been driven by the desire of devotion, will tremblingly weep before the master. For them, there is nothing more demanding than prostrating and kissing the feet of the master for those are enormous spiritual blessings that might not be encountered in billions of rebirths.

However, those who are in their firsts incarnation as humans (after staying too long in the realms of purgatory, ghost, and animal), characterized by surging lusts, scorching anger, blazing grudge, sickening jealousy, mocking the devoted ones, easily say: “Turis India sing ngaba pipis” (“Indian tourists do not have money”).

In other words, seeing, moreover prostrating to, a master requires purity of heart and sufficient deposit of good *karma*.

The Essence of the Kinds of Guru

For any wanderer that has taken a long journey into their selves, there are four kinds of master those are completing each other: the living master, the sacred scripture, the symbolic master, and the secret teacher within one’s self. Most of the advanced yogis meet the four kinds of guru in the mentioned order, but some others meet their master in different sequence.

*The most important duty of the
disciples in the path of guru yoga is
to please their master by practicing
the essence of the teaching*

Among many tasks of a master, the most important one is extracting the teaching thus the disciple may have a code of conduct.

For common people, it is good to learn acting in daily life with the essence of the teaching in the form of *Tatvamasi* (all desire happiness and despise suffering, therefore love others and do not do harm). For yogis in Bali, perhaps it is suitable to fill their entire life with *Bhakti Yoga*, in which all activities such as farming, dancing, and working are conducted as seriously as *mebakti* in Pura. Modifying Mahatma Gandhi's saying that "My life is my real message", in the path of

Bhakti Yoga the operating formula is "My life is my real devotion". The great master Atisha Dipankara condensed the teaching in one word: *Bodhicitta*, which means the altruistic desire to dedicate one's entire life for the salvation, happiness, and liberation of all beings. For the Christians and the Moslems, love is the profound essence of teaching worth to be contemplated and practiced.

One part in Mahabharata tells the story of Karna performing guru yoga toward symbolic master with the form of Dorna's statue thus he achieves the same level with Arjuna in archery. In Tibet there is also a similar story, in which a mother with amazing spiritual blessing asks her merchant son who frequently travels to India to buy her a relic. The son always forgets, even after the mother threatens to commit suicide. Near home, he suddenly remembers his mother's threat thus he takes a teeth of

a dead dog on the roadside, wraps it with a yellow cloth, and presents it to his mother.

Gifted with abundance of spiritual blessings, without any doubt the mother places the “relic” on the altar and worships the symbolic teacher in the morning, day, afternoon, and night. Eventually, at the moment of death the mother realizes the rainbow body. She radiates colorful light that signifies advanced spiritual realization.

A question that frequently asked is: why life does not change when someone meets his or her living teacher? The first possibility is that the person and the master only have a weak karmic relationship, or perhaps even none. In this case, it is suggested to find other master with stronger karmic bond.

The second possibility is, whereas enlightenment can be symbolized by the blooming of lotus, the teacher’s task is only to emit the ray. The disciple has more tasks such as buying the pot, looking for mud, planting the seed, fertilizing, and nurturing the plant. In other words, the meeting with a master without hard work of the disciple (asceticism, meditation, fasting, and other related practices) is like expecting lotus to fall from the sky.

Master as Barometer

Guru is the barometer for the disciple’s journey. If the disciple still sees the master as an ordinary human being, moreover disbelieve and humiliate, then the destination is still far away.

When the disciple can already recognize the master's expression as sacred being (Shiva, Buddha, etc.) then the journey has nearly come to an end⁵. In the master's side, the title of the disciple does not give any effect. But for the disciple, guru is like the mirror of him or her self. When a disciple sees his or her master as a holy being, it means that his or her heart is sacred as well.

Therefore, the practitioners of guru yoga will be very careful in seeing and treating their master. When there is even the smallest piece of doubt, moreover insult to the master, they should hurriedly prostrate asking for forgiveness. There are many persons whose lives are endangered by this kind of err. In the path of guru yoga, the master is always placed above the practitioner's head. Whatever happens in life is believed to be the presence of the master. The pleasing one is the sign that the guru is bestowing gift to motivate while the annoying is the teacher's guidance thus the disciple will not be dragged into the dangerous worldliness. And the disciple's most important duty in the path of guru yoga is to please their master by practicing the essence of the master's teaching. Many disciples experience advanced spiritual realization by carrying out the last duty.

⁵ To his disciple, Gampopa, Milarepa said: "When the master appears as Buddha, the realization of enlightenment is very near".

Meditation is a total rest in whatever happens in the present moment.

Meditation: Revival, Peacefulness, Tranquility

Decades ago, when a guru said that it is a loss for a human being not to practice meditation, there was a doubt in me. However, after many practices, it turns out gradually that the guru is right. Health, peacefulness, happiness, tranquility, and even liberation are the possible results of meditation.

Daniel Goleman from Harvard is quite thoughtful in analyzing the connection between meditation and health. The key point is at the direct influence of meditation on the body's immunity. If the immunity is strengthened, moreover perfected, then health can be made better. Tulku Thondup in *The Healing Power of Mind* (Shambala, 1998) is more vivid. One main thesis of this book says: "Accepting without blaming is the true turning point of healing". Different to other methods of medication that do a lot of removal, the turning point in this approach is acceptance. And one among the fruits of meditation is the acceptance toward life.

Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche in *The Joy of Living* (Harmony Books 2006) has a simple thesis that happiness is healing in both biological and spiritual ways. Therefore this book contains the conception of *The Biology of Compassion*. Compassion does not

*As long as meditation is not embodied yet
in daily life, we need concept. When
meditation has been united in everything
that we do, one should advance from
effort (concept) into effortless (natural, spontaneous,
authentic, without concept)*

only have spiritual expression but also influences biological health. Through meditation, a practitioner is gradually full of compassion.

One chapter in Bernie Siegel's *Peace, Love and Healing* (Rider 1999) is entitled *The Physiology of Love, Joy and Optimism*. It turns out that love, joy, and faith are very helpful in the medication of the physical body. As experienced by numerous meditators, love, joy, and faith are going to naturally develop in accordance with the progress of meditation.

The direct influence of meditation toward peacefulness, happiness, and tranquility has been proven by numerous yogis for thousands of years. Those who have practiced meditation intensely – moreover have often rested in *Samadhi* (concentration) – can personally see that happiness and sadness are merely results of the untrained mind.

Therefore, one understanding of meditation which is both simple and fundamental is: *to meditate is to familiarize*. Meditation is habituating the monkey mind (that keeps on jumping in dissatisfaction to all directions) to the mind of the lion. Thus one symbol of enlightenment is lion because lion is calm and fearless, even toward death.

*When the daily conduct that has been
embracing neatly with the present moment
meets the sufficient accumulation of merit,
and experience unites in the accumulation
of wisdom, it is the suitable time for
the birth of the lion mind that sits
calmly without any fear*

Embodying Meditation

Even the understanding is simple indeed, the embodiment needs sufficient time, persistence, and patience. As early steps, there are four approaches in embodying meditation.

- 1. Aspiration; a strong intention to practice meditation. There are various doors that life opens to get someone in touch with meditation. Some people meditate because of incurable sickness, lingering depression, frustrating search, and there are also some others whose interest in meditation is not caused by problem. Whatever the door is, attraction to meditation is a good start.**
- 2. Habituation; the intention is then embodied through a sequence of habits in daily life. For those who can not practice for an hour, they can meditate for half an hour in a day. Continue trying if concentration is difficult to gain. It takes time to develop balance in cycling, moreover in meditation.**
- 3. Commitment; change is impossible without commitment. Keep on meditating. Unavailability of suitable instructor, technique, time and opportunity, are not reasons to quit. Like in a long journey, carry on walking. Sometimes you might take wrong direction or even get lost, yet such experiences will be very useful in the future.**

4. **Consistency; like dripping water to a rock, it will not give result in days, but any rock will be pierced if such thing happens for years. Meditation does not take days or months but years of persistent efforts.**

Blocking and Opening Energies

Like in the exploration of a foreign land, meditation is full of obstacles as well. Those obstacle might be physical (weak and exhausted body), mental (laziness, doubt, fear), or conceptual. Physical hindrance might be overcome by doing sufficient exercise and maintaining the quality of one's diet. Mental obstacle can be prevailed by a lot of readings, meeting one's master, and learning from other people's experience. The biggest obstacle is the conceptual. There are two kinds of this barrier; the negative (that meditation is in contradiction to religion, that meditation can lead to mental illness, etc.) and the positive (that meditation must be like this and that, that meditation must always calming and pacifying). Actually (as will be discussed more thoroughly below), meditation is like the weather which does not always cloudy or sunny.

Therefore, it is easier to pass the gate of meditation when the practitioner has open-mindedness. Thus, it is said that to meditate is to take a rest. Meditation is a total rest in whatever happens in the present moment. And this resting is easier to be performed by those who are not entering the gate of meditation with concept and expectation.

Concept is Required in the Beginning

Like in a journey, in the beginning we need map and compass (concept). Therefore, the new disciples are asked to sit cross-legged with straightened back and neck and half-opened eyes, while the object of concentration can be directed to the breathing or the rise and fall of the stomach. Those who are frequently disturbed by anger and hatred should contemplate the nature of life which is full of kindness and love, while those with vehement sexual desire are told to contemplate the disgusting natures of human body. Beginners with difficulty in concentrating will be aided with a number of instruments.

In this conceptual approach, a lot of practitioners use fixed mind at an object as their goal. This approach gives vigor toward the destination of the journey. The danger is, it has brought frustration to countless meditators.

As a simple suggestion, the beginners can use concepts as map and compass but with understanding that they are merely instruments and not the goals. Attachment to the concepts (that meditation must be like this and that) makes a practitioner fail to rest at the present moment and even produces a new stress.

Later, when meditation has started to become a habit, moreover has been united with every step in daily life, a leap is needed to leave the concepts. In a master's language: "Effort is necessary when we are not proficient". As long as meditation is not embodied yet in daily life, we need effort, guidance, and

concept. When meditation has been united in everything that we do, one should advance from effort into effortless (natural, spontaneous, authentic, without concept).

Free from Concept

Understanding the nature of concept that produces tension and attachment, it is worth to contemplate entering the gate of meditation without it. Someone said that meditation is a journey without goal.

Many people are frustrated by meditation because of their stiff expectation that after years of practice they must be able to fix their mind thus it can be stopped from running here and there. The harder they try, the more frustrating the journey is.

Contemplated deeply, running is the nature of an unenlightened mind. This is as simple as the wave of ocean, the wetness of water and the heat of fire. Forcing unenlightened mind to stop running is equal to forcing ocean not to be wavy, water not to be wet, and fire not to be hot. It is both unnatural and frustrating.

Therefore, it is important to rest at the present moment by letting all things as they are. Water is surely wet and fire is certainly hot. Therefore a meditation master once said: "There is nothing to be changed in meditation!" The only thing need to be "modified" is the quality of one's mindfulness to whatever happens in life.

An advanced practitioner of mindfulness is no longer busy attaching him or her self to the positive and rejecting the negative, nor celebrating the joy and lamenting the pain. Like the weather, there are times for the cloudy and for the sunny day. Only the openness to embrace everything as they are enables one to rest calmly at the present moment.

When the daily conduct that has been embracing neatly with the present moment meets the sufficient accumulation of merit, and experience unites in the accumulation of wisdom, it is the suitable time for the birth of the lion mind that sits calmly without any fear.

The First and the Last Liberation

As a simple and unbinding resume, the journey of meditation might be condensed into the following three steps:

1. The journey is initiated by learning to get in touch with stillness and balance (*samatha*). Some kinds of *samatha* have object (breathing, the ups and downs of the stomach, etc.), while some others don't. The prime nature of *samatha* is tempting the practitioner to "stay" at the object as long as he or she is able to. In the early medication of physical illness, this helps developing better immunity. In the matter of purifying the negative energies (ignorance, greed, anger), *samatha* indeed cuts all branches and stem of the tree, but the root remains

still. At this point, some practitioners also develop paranormal abilities such as reading others' thought and seeing the future. Be aware not to stop here because it means to get stuck in the middle of the journey. It is difficult to leave the comfort of stillness and balance, thus this point requires courage and perseverance.

2. While in *samatha* the practitioners still have something to be enjoyed, in *vipashana* (insight meditation) they learn to leave their attachment to the pleasing things and their rejection to the annoying ones. More perfect than the stillness and balance of *samatha*, in *vipashana* the practitioners learn to see all things as the appearing and vanishing clouds. Both the pleasing (the white clouds) and the annoying (the black clouds) matters are impermanent. Those who have embodied this profoundly will be like the sky (as the symbol of *vipashana*). The white clouds do not make the sky white as well as the black ones do not turn the sky black. Whatever happens, the sky remains blue and infinite. At this level, the root of the tree of the negative emotion has already been pulled out and burnt. Sometimes, some practitioners are tempted to call this enlightenment. However, it is not. To be more specific, this condition is frequently referred as "purified but not perfected". The mind indeed has been purified by the practice of *vipashana*, but it has not been perfected yet.

3. The perfecting of the mind that has experienced the insight is conducted by the practice of the six perfections: the perfection of giving, the perfection of morality, the perfection of patience, the perfection of vigor, the perfection of concentration, and the perfection of tranquility (emptiness). The first five are like feet stepping to the destination, while the sixth (tranquility or emptiness) is like the eye that guides the journey. Therefore it is said that tranquility which is not embraced by compassion is never taught as a path of enlightenment. As the earlier component of contemplation, tranquility is perfect only when it is filled with compassion (as the essence of the five perfections) and compassion is perfect only when performed in tranquility (selflessness). For those whose wings of tranquility and compassion are already strong, their moment of death will be like the *garuda* offspring's that upon the breaking of the egg immediately soar into the realm of enlightenment.ⁱ

ⁱ In Tantra, one available approach in explaining the journey of meditation is the four yogas of Mahamudra. The first one is one-pointedness, where the practitioner may rest in the balances as long as he or she wishes. The second is simplicity, in which the practitioner becomes as simple as a baby resting (taking shelter) to the ordinary mind. The third is one taste, where all dualities (good – bad, right – wrong, holy – unholy, etc.) lost their grip thus everything are of one taste (no more two/dualistic). Borrowing the opinion of Lama Zopa Rinpoche: “In Shunyata (the perfect stillness) all are of one taste”. The fourth is the level of nonmeditation. At this stage all dualistic

fixations, habit, construction and concept vanish. There is nothing more to be studied or attained, the journey has reached its end. Both the purification and perfection have been completed. All become meditations, especially by maintaining the undistracted mind. Therefore there is a phrase that says "short moments repeated many times". Each day, try to "rest" in whatever things happen at the present moment. The duration might be short, but it should be frequently performed. Longer or moreover too long performance is the coercion of concept.

Beside of the four Mahamudra yogas, the journey of Tantra can also be simplified into Trekcho and Tegal. In Trekcho all dualities (good – bad, holy – unholy, success – failure, etc.) are surpassed. Afterward, the practitioners arrive at the summit of Tegal mountain, characterized by the understanding that all things since the beginningless beginning until the endless ending are perfect as they are.